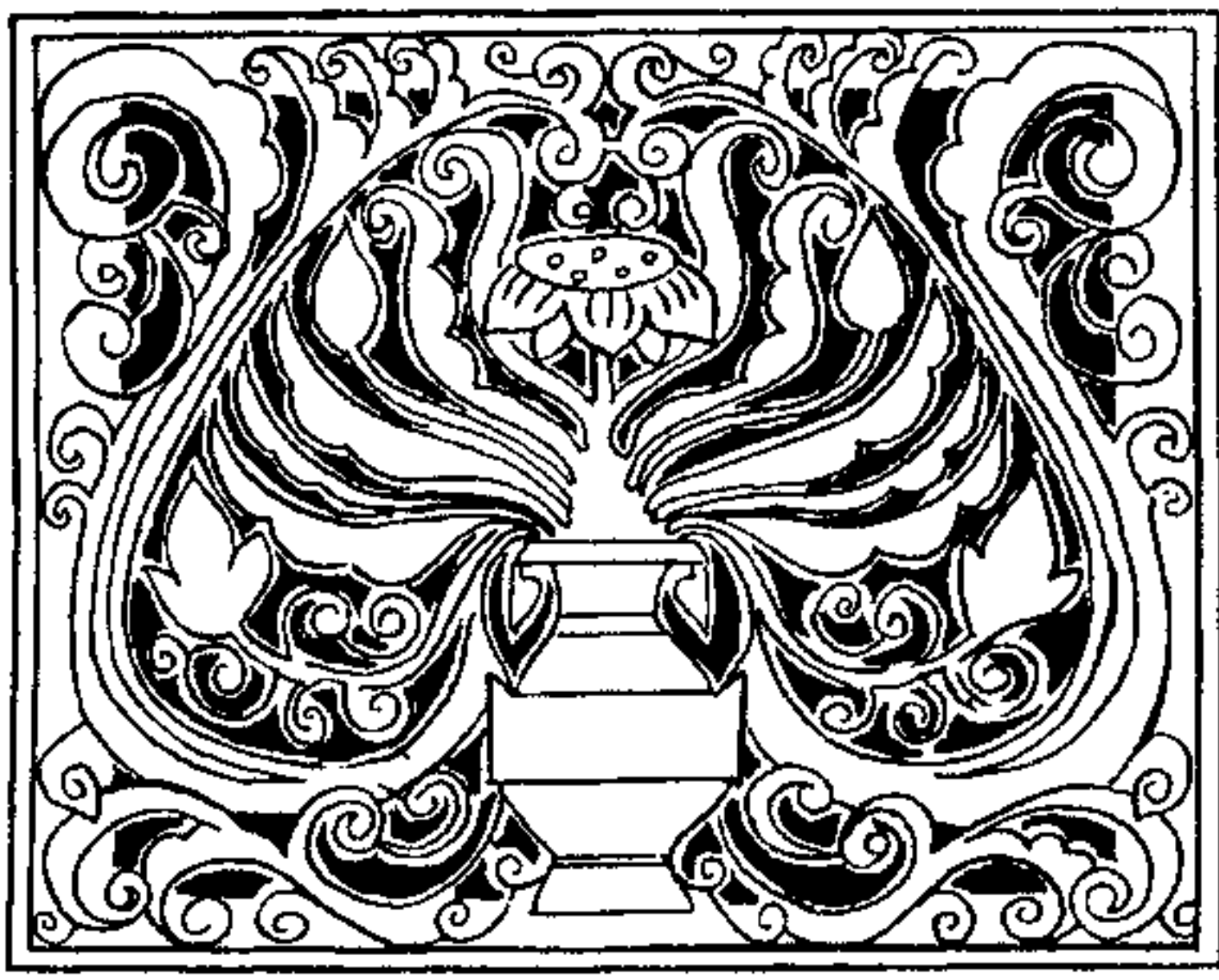




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उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED

Vol. 103

DECEMBER 1998

No. 12

Divine Wisdom

NARADA'S FIRST ADVICE TO DHRUVA, DISSUADING HIM

मैत्रेय उवाच

एवं संजल्पितं मातुराकर्ण्यगमं वचः।
संनियम्यात्मनाऽऽत्मानं निश्चक्राम पितुः पुरात्॥

Maitreya said: Hearing this sound advice of his mother, though given in the form of a grief-stricken prattle, the boy Dhruva controlled his mind somehow, and left his father's city.

नारदस्तदुपाकर्ण्य ज्ञात्वा तस्य चिकीर्षितम्।
स्पृष्ट्वा मुर्धन्यघ्नेन पाणिना प्राह विस्मितः॥

Sage Narada, coming to know of it,

approached the boy, and placing his sanctifying hand on his head, thought as follows in great surprise:

अहो तेजः क्षत्रियाणां मानभङ्गममृष्यताम्।
बालोऽप्ययं हृदा धत्ते यत्समातुरसद्वचः॥

In the matter of his honour, how sensitive a Kshatriya is! Even a small boy like him cannot forget the cruel words of a step-mother!

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 4.8.24-6

We wish you
A Merry Christmas
and
A Happy New Year!

The Tidal Wave of Spirituality

'A historic letter' — says Professor Sankari Prasad Basu in Part V of his monumental Bengali work *Swami Vivekananda O Samakālin Bhārat Varsha*. Not merely historic, the letter written by the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi to Swami Vimalananda on 31 August 1902 has a deep significance. Swami Vivekananda had visualized Advaita Ashrama at Mayavati as a centre dedicated to Advaita and Advaita alone. He had clearly stated this in his Prospectus for the Advaita Ashrama. Yet, coming to Mayavati on 3 January 1901, he found within a few days thereafter that a shrine had been set up and regular worship was going on. The deity, Sri Ramakrishna — the centre around which the great Swami had said repeatedly that India should rally for her regeneration! No doubt, the Swami was upset that his specific mandate for the guidance of the Ashrama had not been heeded to. He severely rebuked both Swami Swarupananda and Mrs. Sevier. The worship, we infer, was not attended with noise: ringing of bells and blowing of conches; else it would have been discovered even earlier. There was an altar, decorated with those beautiful flowers abundant in Mayavati, and incense, fruits, etc. used to be offered to the deity. The worship was discontinued and the shrine itself dismantled on 13 March 1902 — more than a year after Swamiji's admonition. At the head of those who were responsible for setting up the shrine in the first place were Swamis Virajananda and Vimalananda. One can easily imagine that the altered position meant great discomfort for those inclined to dualistic worship. Swami Vimalananda wrote to Holy Mother expressing doubt whether it was proper that he should, under the circumstances, work in the Ad-

vaita Ashrama which being dedicated to Advaita and Advaita alone was not in conformity with his own mental inclination to external worship. The Holy Mother's reply categorically stated that Sri Ramakrishna was Advaita and his disciples were all Advaitins/Advaitavadins.

Professor Basu has found in that letter written by some devotee at the dictation of the Holy Mother a few mistakes in the spelling of words. Yet, we must note that the Holy Mother used the two words: Advaita in respect of Sri Ramakrishna, and Advaitin/Advaitavadin in respect of his followers.

To every chaste Hindu wife, her husband is God Himself. So, from that standpoint, for the Holy Mother, Sri Ramakrishna was one-without-a-second; her mind was solely given to him: *Rāmakṛṣṇa-gata-prāṇā, tannāma-śravaṇa-priyā, tad-bhāva-rañjitākārā*. Swami Vivekananda refers to Sri Ramakrishna as having 'no peer' — 'nowhere else in this world exists that unprecedented perfection, that wonderful kindness for all that does not stop to justify itself, that intense sympathy for man in bondage'¹. We may also say that one established in Advaitic knowledge becomes Advaita, basing on the scriptural text, a Knower of Brahman becomes Brahman.

One who has made 'Advaita', meaning Sri Ramakrishna in the instant case, his ideal in life can be called an Advaitin. So, the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna and their disciples in succession, in an unbroken chain of Guru-disciple relationship, are all Advaitins.

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 6, p. 231. [Hereafter, CW.]

Stated briefly, Sri Ramakrishna went through several dualistic modes of worship no doubt, but his participation in the dualistic modes of worship led him to the perception of the deity in the image, in his own person, and in the mundane objects around him. In detailed narratives of some of these forms of dualistic worship, we find this aspect very strikingly brought out. The Divine Mother in the image breathed, moved about making sound with her anklets, talked to him, appeared in the form of many persons — even those of questionable character — and even of the cat; we find him performing an exalted form of worship which raised many eyebrows. ‘Was this not sacrilege?’ those around him thought, not understanding the divine mood in which the worshipper saw the worshipped in his own person and in the universe around him.

That such image worship could produce a unique character like that of Sri Ramakrishna, made Swami Vivekananda remark:²

It has become a trite saying that idolatry is wrong, and every man swallows it at the present time without questioning. I once thought so, and to pay the penalty of that I had to learn my lesson sitting at the feet of a man who realized everything through idols; I allude to Ramakrishna Paramahansa. ... Take a thousand idols more if you can produce Ramakrishna Paramahansas through idol-worship, and may God speed you!

Yet, we find that when Sri Ramakrishna proceeded to receive Advaitic knowledge from Totapuri through initiation into Sannyasa, that very blissful form of the Divine Mother, for a vision of which he had once been longing, came in the way! ‘The intimately familiar form of the universal Mother, consisting of the effulgence of pure consciousness, appeared before it [the mind] and made me [Sri Ramakrishna] quite oblivious of the renunciation of names and forms of all descriptions.’ ‘No, it cannot be done,’ concluded Sri Ramakrishna after

many attempts. Finally, in the words of Sri Ramakrishna, he cut that form of the Divine Mother mentally in two with the sword of knowledge, and his mind quickly transcended the realm of names and forms into Advaitic experience in *Samadhi*. This transcendence requires superhuman effort and determination.

Having reached the pinnacle of Advaitic experience, Sri Ramakrishna’s mind was filled with unbounded catholicity. It became quite easy for Sri Ramakrishna to undergo the disciplines of those religions which did not originate in the land of his birth: Christianity, and Sufism, a sect of Islam.

Becoming established in *Bhāvamukha* — the Universal I-ness between the aspects of Brahman with attributes and Brahman without attributes — at the command of the Divine Mother, Sri Ramakrishna could wander at will in the domain of spiritual experience — like a prince who could with ease climb to any floor of the palace. He could understand the mental state of any person who came in his presence, and, if that person were a sincere enquirer after truth, Sri Ramakrishna talked to him in the enquirer’s own spiritual language and gently guided him beyond the point where he had become stuck-up in his spiritual journey. Each of these aspirants found in Sri Ramakrishna the ideal he himself cherished and was struck with wonder to find him to be an exemplar of his own religious belief. Thus it is that Sri Ramakrishna demonstrated in his life that Advaita has no quarrel with any of the dualistic modes of religious practice, though these dualistic modes quarrel among themselves. Every view of Godhead — God without forms or attributes, God without form but with attributes, and God with form and attributes — was true. Each religious path, however crude, was valid. Each of the relationships of the soul with God — Monism, Qualified-Monism, and Dualism — was but a stage in the progress of the soul struggling towards perfec-

2. CW, vol. 3, p. 218.

tion.

Place no limit on the limitless God, he insisted. Have steadfastness to your own ideal but do not, becoming one-sided, condemn other religious paths. Be sincere and straight-forward, and proceed Godward with a longing heart, warding off worldly snares through discrimination and dispassion. Just as the compass of a magnetic needle always points due north, train the mind to point Godward under all circumstances. The hereditary farmer, he would say, never gives up his profession because untoward circumstances thwarted his efforts a few times. His was the message of constant struggle by the soul to break all bonds and become free like the mighty, roaring lion of the forest. Dive deep!, he said.

Truly, 'when the flower blossoms, bees come' of themselves. Describing this 'mysterious law of the spiritual world', Swami Saradananda writes:³

...whenever he [Sri Ramakrishna] engaged himself in the discipline and worship of particular aspects of God and realized them, the true aspirants of those communities, devoted to those aspects of the deity, began to pour in, in groups, for some time; and days and nights were passed with them in the discussion of those divine aspects. As soon as he attained perfection in the worship of the Mantra of Rama, the monks of the Ramawat denomination started coming to him in large numbers. No sooner had he been established in each of the devotional moods of Santa, Dasya, etc., spoken of in the Vaishnava books of Bengal, than devotees practising those moods streamed in. The then eminent Tantrik aspirants of this part of the country came to him, when he had completed the discipline prescribed in the sixty-four Tantras, with the help of the Bhairavi Brahmani. Hardly had he perfected himself and attained immediate experience of Brahman, according to the non-dual doctrine, when the good Sadhakas of the Paramahansa denomination

came to him in large numbers.

Even when Sri Ramakrishna went on pilgrimage, 'eminent Sadhakas of those holy places met him and became blessed through the help of his power as the Guru'.⁴

Where Sri Ramakrishna saw 'an order of succession and a relation amongst the previous spiritual doctrines and faiths', we, owing to ignorance, a lack of keenness of perception and a dominant ego, see discordant notes amongst the world religions. We rely on differences between religious creeds rather than stressing unity of spiritual goal achieved by treading a diversity of religious paths, and construct what Sri Ramakrishna calls 'great bars to all brotherly feelings between man and man'.⁵ He insisted on our breaking this religious barrier and uniting as co-travellers on the spiritual journey. Sri Ramakrishna saw 'previous religions as strung together "like a string of gems" and added the next required gem to it' in the light of his spiritual experiences and the needs of the time.

The wide compass of Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual experiences gave him this advantage: 'Having trod all denominational paths and having realized all the aspects of God realizable through them, he could give specific information about each of them.' This made Sri Ramakrishna an encyclopedia on religion and spirituality. He could explain the pitfalls on the spiritual path with unmatched clarity of expression. Again, he proved by his life and spiritual experience that by sincerely following the doctrines particular to any of the existing religions, one certainly reaches the aspect of God which corresponds to that particular religion. Thus, he validated each spiritual path. No need therefore for proselytization into one religion or calling any one religion *the* religion; no need hence for keeping alive sectarian quarrel. By the fact of his reaching the Ultimate along each of the spiritual

3. *Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1990), pp. 539-40. [Hereafter, *Great Master*.]

4. *Great Master*, p. 556.

5. CW, vol. 6, p. 301.

paths, Sri Ramakrishna became the conduit for spiritual aspirants to reach their own spiritual goals in and through his personality.

By defining the best of devotees as one who sees that God alone has become the universe, its living beings and the twenty-four cosmic principles, Sri Ramakrishna has presented an understanding of the world around us in the light of his own experience which spiritual aspirants of this age with a scientific bent of mind prefer. The world is not an illusion to be discarded nor a mere mental idea; it is an appearance superimposed on reality, but the superimposing cover can be removed to view reality as it really is and a relationship of worshipful service or identity established with it.

Not all look upon an incarnation in the same way, and there is also an evolution in one's perception of an incarnation. However, though one is helped to grow and advance along one's chosen path, the extent of spiritual progress varies from one person to another depending on the light in which he accepts an incarnation. So, one may accept Sri Ramakrishna as a *sadhaka*, a saint, or in any other manner according to one's own understanding, but by accepting Sri Ramakrishna as an incarnation of God born on earth to help struggling souls in their efforts to unite with their true nature, one derives the utmost even in this life.

Swami Vivekananda, for the welfare of humanity, installed Sri Ramakrishna at the Ramakrishna Math, Belur—the centre from which emanates tidal waves of spirituality. After consecrating the Math he said to those assembled:

Pray today all of you, heart and soul, to the holy feet of Sri Ramakrishna, that the great Avatara of this cycle that he is, he may 'For the welfare of the many, and for the happiness of the many', reside in this holy spot from this day for a great length of time, and ever continue to make it the unique centre of harmony amongst all religions.⁶

Once he elaborately expressed his ideas in

regard to the Ramakrishna Math, of which we give below an extract:

It is my wish to convert this Math into a chief centre of spiritual practices and the culture of knowledge. The power that will have its rise from here will flood the whole world and turn the course of men's lives into different channels; from this place will spring forth ideals which will be the harmony of Knowledge, Devotion, Yoga, and Work; at a nod from the men of this Math a life-giving impetus will in time be given to the remotest corners of the globe; while all true seekers after spirituality will in course of time assemble here. A thousand thoughts like these are arising in my mind.⁷

Our Lord is the visible embodiment of the harmony of all ideals. He will be established on earth if we keep alive that spirit of harmony here. We must see to it that people of all creeds and sects, from the Brahmana down to the Chandala, may come here and find their respective ideals manifested. The other day when I installed Sri Ramakrishna on the Math grounds, I felt as if his ideas shot forth from this place and flooded the whole universe, sentient and insentient. ... The lion-roar of Advaita must resound in every hearth and home, in meadows and groves, over hills and plains. Come all of you to my assistance and set yourselves to work.⁸

A visit to the Ramakrishna temple at Belur reveals that this has become a reality. Sri Ramakrishna's call, 'Oh! my children, where are you?' resounds even today in the receptive hearts of many. Vast streams of spiritual aspirants enter the holy precincts with devout hearts to offer their hearts' adoration in ever so many ways. They come with doubts which get resolved; they come with hurdles on their spiritual path which get demolished by his gracious look. Who can say in how many ways the Master radiates waves of spirituality to engulf his visitors in his warm embrace, speaking warmly to them in their hearts, 'Come again'. □

6. CW, vol. 7, p. 116.

7. CW, vol. 7, pp. 157–8.

8. CW, vol. 7, p. 162.

A Pilgrimage to Belur Math

MS. RADHA CHAKLADER

In this short write-up the author, of Vancouver, Canada, summarises her experience of the sublime atmosphere of Ramakrishna Math, Belur, which she visited during the Christmas of 1996.

We moved over from Calcutta to Vancouver in January 1960. It took us a while to get acquainted to a foreign country—its culture, and educational system—, and also to know its people and history. Life in Vancouver was good. Everything was fine here except that there was an emptiness within me and we felt life must have more meaning than success and good living in a good country.

It was about the mid-seventies when a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, Swami Bhaskaranandaji, came from the Seattle Vedanta Society to speak at the Vishwa Hindu Parishad Temple in Vancouver and we went to listen to his talk. And that was the beginning of our association with the Ramakrishna Mission Ashramas and many of their vastly learned and distinguished monks. Truly speaking, Vedanta brought me the message of what could be a meaningful life and living. Vedanta removed the emptiness from within me and gave me fulfilment.

We visited Calcutta and other cities in India every two years or so. Whenever we were in Calcutta we always paid our visit to Belur Math. Sometimes during these visits I thought it would have been so nice if we could have stayed at the Belur Math Guest House so that we did not have to fight Calcutta traffic and could visit the temples for longer times. I remember one year during the Navami Puja (Durga Puja): I could stay at the Math for only two hours and then we had to rush to get back home. I really wished that day I could have attended the worship

the whole day.

My wish to stay at the Belur Math Guest House came to be fulfilled on Christmas Eve in 1996. My husband had made all the arrangements for our stay at the Math's Guest House for five days. I was truly delighted because Belur Math on the bank of the Ganges is a very sacred place for many reasons. The main temple contains Sri Ramakrishna's holy relics. This is also the holy ground where the mortal remains of Ma Sarada, Swami Vivekananda and many direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna were consigned to flames. I must admit that I was a little bit afraid because Belur Math is the headquarters of the entire Ramakrishna Math and Mission where many monks and brahmacharins reside and undergo austere spiritual practice. And it is also a training centre.

We arrived at the Math Guest House just before noon on December 24, 1996. The caretaker of the Guest House (Shibuda) was a nice person, who opened for us the room where we would be staying. He asked us to come to the dining room by 12 noon. The simple meal that was served was both sacred and delicious. Belur Math remains closed to visitors between 12 noon and 3 p.m. We were told that we could go to the Math when it opens. So, the time came, and we walked through the gate to Belur Math and visited all the temples. We noticed that the programme for that evening was written on a board outside. After the arati (vesper service) there would be a Christmas service. We went to pay our respects to the Manager

of the Math, Swami Prameyanandaji, and the Swami was happy to know that the arrangement for stay and food were alright.

Around 5:30 p.m. it was time for arati: a very auspicious moment when day passed into night. The chirping of many birds coming back to the trees for a night's rest filled the air outside the temple. Inside the temple, the hall was full, and devotees were sitting down to watch arati. Some people had to stand as all sitting spaces were taken. We noticed that volunteers were working diligently to maintain seating order. The sitting arrangements were like this: first monks and brahmacharins, then men and next women. Conch shell was blown to announce the auspicious moment and arati began with singing of songs in adoration of Sri Ramakrishna. It was wonderful to be present at this service.

When the arati was over, people stood up and the sitting arrangements were slightly changed. Volunteers quickly rearranged the rugs. At arati time the devotees had sat facing the image of Sri Ramakrishna; now they sat facing the East in front of the altar beautifully decorated with flowers, garlands, candles and a photograph of Virgin Mary with Baby Jesus in her arms adorning the centre of the altar. Below this photograph was a picture of Lord Jesus. This time the monks and brahmacharins sat in front of the altar and the women and men devotees sat on the right and left sides.

A few assigned persons became busy placing food offerings, decorated in an artistic manner, on the lower part of the altar. Apples, oranges, Indian sweets, were piled on serving plates in beautiful arrangements. Different kinds of cakes, chocolate bars, drinks in small cups were offered as well. Then candles were lighted and everything looked lovely. Next, the worshipper, a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, came to perform worship and arati of Lord Jesus. In the background brahmacharins sang Christmas Carols:

Silent night, holy night

All is calm, all is bright....

Away in a manger, no crib for his bed...

And the Christmas spirit came alive with its beauty, sweetness and holiness. After the vesper, a monk spoke in English for an hour on the life and teachings of Lord Jesus. Christmas service thus came to an end. We felt fortunate to be present at this Christmas service of 1996 at the Belur Math.

During our pilgrimage to Belur Math some of the things which specially struck me as significant are:

1. The first day we arrived we were told that *mangalarati* starts at 4:30 in the morning. We thought that was really early. However, Shibuda told us that he would call us. So we could attend *mangalarati*. Except once we always attended arati. This was again another auspicious time to pray in the temple. It is also an unforgettable experience to observe and remember how beautiful, peaceful and calm the river Ganges and all the temples looked during those early hours.

2. We appreciated visiting the Ramakrishna Museum. To be able to see the objects and articles used by the Holy Mother, and the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna was quite a privilege. Two occasions were emotionally stirring for me: (i) to see the original urn where Sri Ramakrishna's holy relics were kept, and (ii) to see the long green shirt and the green cap which made me envision Sri Ramakrishna wearing those garments. Momentarily the image became very vivid to me. The photographs displayed in the museum were wonderful and the viewer got a good grasp of the history of Belur Math and the Ramakrishna Mission—as to how it started.

3. Visiting the temples daily and offering our salutations to Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Ma, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Brahmananda and some of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna (at the holy ground where their last rites had been performed) were

(Continued on page 687)

The Inner Meaning and the Unique Synthesis of Indian and Western Music in the Vesper Hymn Composed by Swami Vivekananda

SWAMI SARVAGANANDA

The author, a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, presents in this article his interpretation of the Vesper Hymn composed by Swami Vivekananda and depicts the sublime atmosphere created every evening in the Ramakrishna Temple at Belur.

As you walk towards the majestic temple of Sri Ramakrishna at Belur Math while the vesper service is going on, you hear a mellifluous church music, as it were, emanating from the temple along with a periodic, soft, high-pitch, metallic sound. This high frequency sound is, indeed, the sound of the bell rhythmically rung by the worshipper and, of course, it has become a part of the composition. As you enter the temple you find hundreds of people seated on carpets spread on the floor and singing aloud in front of the beautiful marble image of Sri Ramakrishna, with the worshipper in the spacious sanctum sanctorum (*Garbhagriha*) waving various articles, one after the other, before the image. An atmosphere of peace and divine enchantment emanates from everywhere. The breeze from the holy Ganges streaming in through the open windows and doors soothes the burning mind and heart of the afflicted. And the sublimity elevates the mind to a spiritual plane. This divine pleasure that you derive out of this daily vesper hymn is the principal aspect of the unique composition by Swami Vivekananda. Yet there are other technical aspects also, with reference to which the uniqueness of this composition may be discussed in brief. The year 1998 being the hundredth year of its composition, in paying our hum-

ble homage to this great gift of Swami Vivekananda to mankind, we discuss some aspects in this article.

The Origin of the Vesper Hymn

Soon after Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master, left his mortal body at Cossipore, among all other things, typical myths relating to the divine and occult powers of the Master started pouring in from the lips of devotees and others. Perhaps, some intentionally created such myths to establish that the Master loved them much more than the others and that *they* were his near and dear ones. But for the initiative of Sri Girish Chandra Ghosh, truth could have been distorted due to this tendency among the so-called devotees. On Swami Vivekananda's returning from the West in 1897, Girish Chandra Ghosh requested him one day to write an authentic biography of Sri Ramakrishna. All the direct disciples too thought Vivekananda was the fittest person for this purpose. But Vivekananda did not live to see forty, and Sri Ramakrishna had bequeathed to him the tremendous responsibility of founding an organization — the Ramakrishna Mission — and of setting the *Yuga-Chakra* (Wheel of the Age) in motion. Our tiny brains are indeed incapable of appreciating what a huge task, in India and outside, Swamiji was to perform in the five years

since he came back from his first visit to the West. Perhaps, that 'authentic biography' was awaiting the golden touch of Swami Saradananda, another gifted disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. Swami Saradananda, years later, completed the master-piece biography, *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master* (originally in Bengali and later translated into English by Swami Jagadananda), which practically answers the queries of scientific-minded men in a language that simultaneously removes all doubts and escalates devotion in the heart. Vivekananda, however, avoided the request of Girish Ghosh by replying, 'I have not really understood even a bit of him (Sri Ramakrishna). I am afraid, the portrait of a monkey will appear if I try to draw the face of Shiva!' But then he did comply with the request — not in the form of a book, but in the form of a hymn, exquisite, exuberating, and precise.

Sometime in 1898, at Nilambar Mukherjee's garden-house at Belur, he composed the verses and himself set it to music. The complete song was first publicly sung on the occasion of Sri Ramakrishna's birthday at the shrine of the Dawn family in Belur. Harmonium was introduced at Belur Math in the twenties of this century. Before that, this prayer song was usually sung with Tanpura and Pakhoaj only as accompaniments.

At first Swamiji composed only the first two lines with a tail-piece, as below:

Khaṇḍana bhava bandhana jaga vandanā vandi tomāy, Nirāñjana naranūpadhara nirguṇa guṇamay. Namō namō prabhu vākya-manātita manovacanaikādhār, Jyotir jyoti ujala hṛdikandara tumi tamo bhañjanahār. Dhe dhe dhe laṅga raṅga bhaṅga bāje aṅga saṅga mṛdaṅga, Gāyiche chanda bhakata-vṛnda āratī tomār. Jaya jaya āratī tomār

But this was found inadequate to cover the total duration of *Aratrikam* (evening vesper service). And the same lines had to be repeated again and again. So, Swamiji lengthened the body of the song with seven more

verses thereby giving a shape to the philosophy of God's divine incarnation — a beautiful poetic expression combined with sophisticated and elevating music, in the most technical sense of the term.

Philosophy: The Great Proclamation

It was the afternoon of 20 June 1884 at the Dakshineswar Kali temple. Sri Ramakrishna was in his room with Sri Mahendranath Gupta and a few other devotees from Calcutta. The Master said to M.:

The devotees who come here may be divided into two groups. One group says, 'O God, give me liberation.' Another group, belonging to the inner circle, doesn't talk that way. They are satisfied if they can know two things: first, who I (referring to himself) am; second, who they are and what their relationship to me is.¹

There is a great philosophy hidden in this statement. This is practically a re-iteration of the five thousand year old Upanishadic statement which reveals a *great equation*, the equation between the Macro and the Micro, between Shiva and Jiva, between the Self (Paramatman) and the embodied self (Jivatman). The teacher utters with conviction: *Tattvamasi* (That Thou Art) and the disciple compliantly responds — *Aham Brahmasmi* (I am Brahman). Swamiji proficiently conveys this ultimate Truth in and through these verses of the vesper hymn sung every evening at Belur Math. We present below a short review of the profound inner meaning of the text of the song.

Verses 1-4 — Who Am I?

Khaṇḍana bhava bandhana ... nirakli tava kṛpāy.

In these verses is given the answer to the question 'Who am I?'. Vivekananda's bold venture into the Unlimited with limited accessories (in the form of language, music and rhythm) is evident in these four

1. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1994), p. 459.

verses. Swamiji pictures how the Absolute comes down to the relative plane with an incredible zeal and irresistible compassion for the welfare of suffering humanity. *Nitya, Buddha, Mukta, Śuddha* (Eternal, All-Knowing, Ever-Free and Ever-Pure) Brahman comes down to the realm of *Māyā* (Its Power *Śakti*) in the midst of tremendous pain and sorrow. As Sri Sankaracharya explains in his Introduction to the *Gītā Bhāṣya* (*Upodghāta Bhāṣya*), Sri Bhagavan (God) takes a human form (as if), (*bhūtānujighṛkṣayā*) out of compassion for suffering beings, (*svaprayojanābhāve'pi*) without any trace of His 'personal interest', and then He engages Himself in spreading 'knowledge', called (*loka-saṁgraha*) maintenance of world order, by which man can make himself FREE. So Swamiji says:

Verse I

Khaṇḍana bhava bandhana ... : He who destroys the bondage of *Samsāra* (the transmigratory existence, the world), who is *Nirāñjana* — bereft of any blemish, now, *Nararūpadhara* — has taken the form of a human being, *Guṇamaya* — full of attributes (*Sattva, Rajas, Tamas*), though He is *Nirguṇa* — attributeless. That Sri Ramakrishna I worship. The attributeless non-dual Absolute appears with name and form — *jāta iva*, as if born, *dehāvān iva*, as if embodied, though these attributes never touch It. And that is why He truly maintains His status: *Jagavan-dana* — ever worshipped by all, in the past and present, and worthy of being worshipped in the future as well.

Verse II

Agha means sin. And sin is darkness which implies dearth of knowledge. In fact ignorance begets sin. No one endowed with true knowledge commits sin. He, the Lord, destroys darkness — *Mocana agha dūṣaṇa* because He is *Cidghana*, the condensed light of knowledge. His very appearance, embodiment, makes the world beautiful, fulfilled and exuberant. So, He is the 'Honour' of the world, *Jagabhūṣaṇa*; He sees nothing but

Consciousness everywhere. So He is *Jñānā-ñjana, Vimalanayana*, endowed with the collyrium of Knowledge on His beautiful, soothing eyes. And whoever casts a glance at Him gets the feeling of being de-infatuated (with the world) and rejuvenated (by a higher vision) at the same time.

Verse III

Bhāvasāgara means ocean of experience. The word *Bhāva* has several connotations in Sanskrit and carries with it a broad idea. It means 'thought'; it also means 'existence', so that *Abhāva* would imply non-existence. 'His existence' makes everything exist! So He is 'pure existence' — existence personified. It also means 'attitude', so that Sri Ramakrishna is considered an ocean of 'attitudes' — materialistic and spiritual. Of course, for the uplift of the world, He displays His spiritual attitudes only. A devotee is also imbued with spiritual attributes through meditation upon Sri Ramakrishna.

In the Vaishnava cult, we find different *Bhāvas*: *Śānta* (calm and serene), *Dāsyā* (attitude of service, 'I am the servant of the Lord'), *Sakhya* (Friendly attitude towards God), *Vātsalya* (mother-like affectionate attitude towards God) and *Madhura* (relation of a sweetheart). In Sri Ramakrishna we find all these attitudes towards God in full measure. He exhibited the moods found in Radha and in Sri Chaitanya. He also exhibited the nature of those who had ascended to the *Nirvikalpa* plane (*bālakavat, unmiḍavat, piśācavat*). Sometimes he had external consciousness when he used to dance and sing and talk to devotees; sometimes he was in a semi-conscious state; and sometimes unconscious like a painted picture on a canvas.

Pure Existence is equated to pure Love in our scriptures. That pure Love — ever stormy — has taken, as though, the form of Sri Ramakrishna — *Cira unmiḍa prema pāthār*; in Him is not a dry, philosophical advent of the Lord. Unquestioning Love is the cause of His appearance in this sorrowful world. His face radiates the Bliss of

Divine love.

Verse IV

In the *Vivekachudamani* Sri Sankaracharya says — *Durlabham trayamevaitat daivānugrahaletukam, Manusyatvaṁ mu-mukṣutvaṁ mahāpuruṣasaṁśrayaḥ* — Three things are really rare to get on this earth — a human life, the desire for emancipation and the company of a great man. Human birth is the first golden opportunity because realization of God is possible only in human birth, and altogether impossible even for gods and demons. Again, all human beings are not equally interested in the liberation of the self. Thus, the second great opportunity is the 'desire for emancipation'. And this desire is to be worked out in human birth only. Thirdly and finally, a spiritual aspirant is really blessed if and when the company of a 'great man' (Acharya Guru) who has realized the Self, is available to him (the aspirant).

Moreover, Sri Sankaracharya explains: the vital energy or *Prāṇa* within our body-mind complex can express itself in two ways: e.g. through *Āsura-vṛtti*, demon-like urge for the fulfilment of sense desires and accomplishment of material needs; and, secondly, through *Daiva-vṛtti*, in a divine way, with an intention of acquiring true 'knowledge' by realizing 'Truth' not intellectually by scriptural study or inferentially but experientially. Conflict between the above two ways of expression of *Prāṇa* is called *Daivāsura Saṅgrāma*, the battle between the gods and the demons. Human life — a mixture of good and bad — is actually the 'state of balance' of these two alternately manifesting forces. Evidently, when *Asura Śakti* dominates, *Adharma* prevails, while *Dharma* is established if *Deva Śakti* takes the upper hand.

Swami Vivekananda offers the life of Sri Ramakrishna before the world and says that it is the 'mould' for all who want to survive in a righteous way in this age. Sri Ramakrishna is now manifest to build a

'bridge' between the Relative and the Absolute — to effect communion with God, to set in motion a *new world order*. In the firmament of the world, he is *Jṛmbhita* — manifested, *Yoga-Sahāya* — to help man commune with God. The state of Samadhi, i.e., the state of absolute concentration, is not merely a theoretical exercise after the advent of Sri Ramakrishna. This ideal state is verifiable by us today — *Nirodhana Samāhitamāna nirakhi tava kṛpāy*, and Swamiji assures us that we too can attain to this state if only we will try.

Verses 5-8 — Who are they (the disciples)?

And, what is the relationship between Me (the Lord) and My divine mission, and they, the disciples?

The last four verses, *Bhañjana duḥkha ... jagajana duḥkha jāy*.

This is indeed the method by which Sri Ramakrishna spread his net-work to fulfil his 'Mission' of *Lokasaṅgraha* — spread of knowledge, setting in motion a new world order, and removing *Dharmaglāni*, religious degradation on this earth. Often and often Swami Vivekananda drew the attention of his listeners to the fact that the 'synthesis' of the four Yogas — Jnana, Bhakti, Karma and Raja — is the specific path for spiritual aspirants in this age. And Vivekananda only reiterated what his Guru Sri Ramakrishna had stated in this regard. Other direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna also lived their lives serving humanity in various planes and living in compliance with this doctrine of 'Synthesis of Yoga'. And thus they finally achieved a state of bliss where they realized the essential nature of their souls and their relation with Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna.

Sri Ramakrishna used to cry out from the roof of the mansion at Dakshineswar — 'Oh! my children, please do come, I can't bear to live without you.' So, these 'children' are coming — even now — to understand 'who they are' and what is the relationship between them and the Lord. The number is ever-increasing, thousands are rushing to the Great Master from different corners of

the world to quench their parched souls with the elixir of divine bliss — to ameliorate their life-style. The *Great Equation* of the Upanishad has been literally taken to the doors of everyone by the great Vivekananda!

Verse V

Disbelief in God has become a fashion in modern society. The caustic relation between the economically stable and the weaker sections of society, the prominence of sex, money and violence which have encroached upon the peaceful life of the great old India, the uncertainty due to scientific disasters — nuclear and other, appearance of newer and fatal diseases like AIDS etc., awfully threaten man reminding him again and again of the transient nature of life. Sri Ramakrishna correctly detected and directly stated the cause of '*duḥkha*' in modern man. It is nothing but 'lust and gold'. He indicated this to be the greatest bondage of modern man — which does not make him see the Truth. Sri Ramakrishna is *Karuṇāghana*, one who compassionately removes this *duḥkha* of his devotees, though he is *Karma kaṭhore*, a hard task-master! It is very difficult to understand whether the Lord takes upon Himself the responsibility to rescue the devotee and/or the devotee has the birth-right to worship and love the Lord in order to get liberated from bondage!

All the time Sri Ramakrishna would work, as we find in his biography or in the *Gospel* (by Mahendranath Gupta), with tremendous zeal, meeting people in Calcutta and its vicinity. In that sense also he was (and still is) *Karma kaṭhore*. He wants his devotees too to work hard. Because the devotees' work is 'work soaked in love', bereft of even the slightest tinge of grief and desire. There is bliss only, no sorrow, no regret, no shopkeeping. The devotees' zeal for work is, indeed, activated by his love for the *Iṣṭa* — the Lord. So, Vivekananda says — *Prāṇārpaṇa jagata tāraṇa Kṛtana kalidore* — the whole-souled works of love alone is ca-

pable of destroying human bondage in Kali Yuga.

Verse VI

It is commonly said in Bengal — *Je jār cintā kare, se tāri sattā pāy* — one gets the nature of the object (human) upon whom one cogitates. Sri Ramakrishna, according to Vivekananda, was *Tyāgīśvara* — king among renouncers, rather 'renunciation personified'. And it is not a hyperbole because we find it stated often in his authentic biography that renunciation was his true nature. There was no trace of sex-and money-mindedness in his being. A piece of coin if placed in his hand would instantly cause distortion in his hand, stoppage of the respiratory system and other physical ailments! Thus, he was *Vaīcana kāma kāñcana* — totally free from lust and gold. If one would think constantly of him, one would certainly imbibe this nature of his and easily destroy the bondage of sex and money, even the mental attachment towards these.

One becomes full of Ramakrishna. This was clearly demonstrated in the life of the Holy Mother, Sri Sarada devi. Her movements, her realizations, her extending loving shelter to the distressed, etc. were sufficient proof that she became one with Sri Ramakrishna. But this is impossible without 'love'. Hence, Swamiji prays on our behalf: *Deha pade anurāg*, please give me devotion to your lotus feet, Oh! the best of men, *Naravara*.

Verse VII

Realization takes a man beyond all kinds of doubt and hesitation. He becomes clear in his vision, unidirectional in his decision, altruistic in his action. He becomes full of love irrespective of caste, creed or social status. That is possible through meditation on Sri Ramakrishna who is (as narrated above) — *Nirbhaya Gatasaṁśaya Dṛḍhaniścaya mānasavān*, fearless and firm, free from doubt, decisive in his action, *Niṣkāraṇa bhakata śaraṇa*, giving shelter to his devotees without any reason to justify, *Tyaji jāti kula*

mān, caring the least for caste, creed, etc. We become equanimous like the sun which shines equally on the wicked and the saintly person, on the poor and the rich, on the illiterate and the prudent.

It was on an afternoon in the 1880's when Sri Ramakrishna was proceeding to some devotee's place in central Calcutta. Abruptly, at a crossing of roads, he jumped out of the vehicle he was in, and rushed to a 'Fakir' (a Muslim ascetic) standing on the other side of the road, crying with tears flowing down his cheeks—*Pyārī ājā, pyārī ājā* (my beloved, please do come). Sri Ramakrishna reached him in great haste and embraced him with tears in his eyes. The co-passengers were taken aback, as they could not believe what they witnessed. Did the 'Fakir' at least realize, then or later, that his 'Pyārī' had come in a human frame? Who can tell for sure?

Verse VIII

Goṣpada vāri — a small quantity of water accumulated in just the space on earth created by the hoof of a cow — a small mass of water negligible compared to the expanse of the ocean. This world appears to be as insignificant as that small mass of water, to the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna. It is easily crossed. Or, it may mean the world becoming insignificant, the attainment to this state by the devotee makes him see the Lord everywhere, with 'overwhelming love' and 'same-sightedness' in action. This is *Premārpaṇa Samadarśana*, universal love and same-sightedness go together. Consequently, a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna becomes a perennial source of joy and spiritual fervour. And *Jaga jana duḥkha jāy*, the sorrow and grief in day-to-day life are all destroyed. The characteristics of the Bhagavan percolates down to the devotee and ultimately the lover, the Beloved and love all become one.

Swami Vivekananda was truly a 'seer'. He foresaw that Sri Ramakrishna is the 'Prophet of the Age'. When the heart-aches

in life will become unbearable, when society will turn mechanical, when man will suffer from loneliness, when the human mind will try to get rid of a dreadful emptiness, when human emotions will be tossed about by sensual enjoyments, then the message of Sri Ramakrishna will appear as a soothing balm — a great assurance of peace on earth and of immense possibilities hereafter.

The Tail Part (Cadenza)

Namo namo Prabhu ... Ārati tomār.

Namo namo Prabhu, I prostrate before Thee, Oh Lord, do Thou who art *Vākya manātīta* the Self beyond speech and mind, *Jyotir jyoti*, the light of Knowledge, *Ujala hr̥di kandara*, *tumi tamo bhañjanahār*, remove all darkness and illumine the heart.

After this short but significant prayer comes the narration of rhythms on the percussion instruments — *Dhe dhe dhe laṅga raṅga ... etc.* Next, Swamiji hails the Lord — *Jaya jaya ārati tomār, Hara hara ārati tomār, Śiva śiva ārati tomār*. Let us focus on the words *jaya jaya, hara hara* and *śiva śiva*. Divine Incarnations always appear along with 'Śakti' — the divine 'Power'. There are two hails — *jaya jaya*, one meant for Sri Ramakrishna, the other for his Śakti, Sri Sarada Devi. *Hara* means to take away — the thorn of 'ignorance'. As Sri Ramakrishna often used to describe, the thorn of ignorance is to be removed with the help of the thorn of 'knowledge' and then both are to be thrown away. It is a prayer to the Lord that He may kindly take away both the thorns — the chain of iron and that of gold — from my mind, because both are equally bad, creating bondage for the Self. At the end Swamiji says *śiva śiva*, meaning *maṅgalam* — auspicious, perpetual good, eternal peace. One *śiva* relates to *asmad* — 'I', and the other relates to *yusmad* — 'you', whichever is not 'I' is 'you'. So there are only two elements in creation — 'I' (subject) and 'you' (object) — and let there be peace for both. May peace permeate all existence!

Harmony between

Classical Music — Indian and Western

Music is the footprint of God! The devotee reaches Him on the wings of music — says Rabindranath Tagore. In India music is always considered to be a direct path to the Supreme. Music is the harmony of the triad: *gīta* (songs), *vādyā* (accompanying instrumental music) and *nṛtya* (dance). Thus, music is the 'bridge' between the devotee and God, the lover and the Beloved.

As Swami Vivekananda pointed out, religion is the principal note in Indian life-style. And 'Religion is Realization'. There are two parts in religion: the non-essential part (rituals, doctrines, dogmas, books, etc.) and the essential part (realization of Atman — the Self). The essential part (grain) is clothed in the non-essential part (husk) of religion. The husk protects but the grain is desired. However, music leads the *sadhaka* directly to the essential part without having to go through the ritualistic part of religion. That is why it is told — *Na saṅgītāt parā* — there is no *Vidyā* (way to reach the Supreme) superior to music. It is a powerful technique for transcendence from the finite to the Infinite, from darkness to light, from death to life, from matter to Spirit.

Dhrupad is a typical note in Indian music, and it receives the greatest honour among all other notes. The compositions in *Dhrupad* music are also very ancient. There are other styles in Indian music too, viz., *Kīrtan*, *Thumri*, *Kheyāl*, *Tappā*, *Ghazal*, etc. along with folk-styles which attract ordinary, ease-loving people very easily. Swami Vivekananda much liked *Dhrupad* because it is sophisticated, requires sustained practice with a tremendous zeal and has a captivating spiritual touch. Its majesty automatically draws respect from the audience. Swamiji wanted to raise the countrymen plunged in *tamas* (lethargy) to *rajas* (dynamism) in every field of human endeavour: education and culture, music, economy, sports and athletics, medicine, agriculture

and, surprisingly, even in religion.

Vivekananda was much before his time. We, therefore, find nothing unusual when we hear that Swamiji appreciated Western classical music in Paris. In fact, he went into the details of Western classical compositions in France, during his *second* visit to the West. Swamiji appreciated the 'cadence' in Western music, its brevity, its pin-pointedness and the beautiful sonorous melodies. Their expression of an urgency for a dynamic spirit even in devotional music like Christmas carols enchanted Swamiji greatly.

Technically, in Western classical parlance, 'cadence' means a return from the 5th note to the 1st note. And if you return from the 6th note to the 1st note, it is called disrupted cadence. But disrupted cadence cannot be used at the end of a melody. And this rule was rigidly followed by Swamiji while he tuned the evening *Aratrika* hymn. It is charming to observe that at the end of the entire song, i.e., during its *cadenza*, the disrupted cadence is never used. Swamiji's strict adherence to applying these rules is as noteworthy as is his love for Indian classical music, and therefore his success in blending the two different sciences without disturbing the spiritual fervour potent in this prayer hymn. Rabindranath and other composers of later times in India tried to mix Indian and Western classical music — both vocal and instrumental — but the blending is found to be perfect only in Vivekananda's composition, not in the eyes of a devotee, but in view of all technical criteria as well.

It is also very interesting to draw a parallel — that the architectural pattern of the temple at Belur Math is also unique in the history of the world because of its unequivocal synthesis of Western school of architecture and rich Indian traditions found in different parts of India as well as in different principal religious faiths of the world. No wonder, the Western church-like architectural designs of the layout of the temple,

coupled with Buddhistic, Mughal (Islamic), Rajput (Hindu) and South Indian (Hindu) styles has come to be widely appreciated especially by the students of civil engineering and architecture.

If you are born and brought up in the West, and if you stand outside the temple during evening prayer time, you will feel a beautiful vibrant church-song emanating out of a church, as it were, and touching your heart. A typical Hindu will feel, at the same time, that a pure *Dhrupad* classical music is being played inside the temple where his beloved Deity is receiving worship. It is really very understandable that people from all over the world pour in at Belur Math to get their inner conflicts soothed and to realize the Deity's unalloyed kinship in their own souls.

The rhythm portion of the song also is set to a perfect symphony indicating Swamiji's extraordinary depth and command over music. From a purely technical point of view, the gradual and rational development of the 'tempo' (speed) and synchronization of different 'metres' is a perfect achievement in the realm of musical 'composition'. Because the song is highly philosophical, the rhythm is also to be so chosen as to aptly express the depth of the inner

meaning of the song. Swamiji accomplished it in a professional manner. Then comes the mood to dance, and the rhythm is chosen accordingly too. Again, the cycle is to be completed, and the singer and the listener are taken back to the meditative mood as at the beginning. That is also done, when the cadenza ends with the starting stanza! This is, therefore, a *complete song*, a unique and invaluable gift by the incarnation of Lord Shiva to mankind in order to achieve, as Swami Shivananda said, the awakening of the Cosmic coiled Energy — the *Samasti Kulakundalini*. □

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A Pilgrimage to Belur Math

(Continued from page 679)

emotionally rewarding. Also going to Most Revered President Maharaj, who is looked upon as a living symbol of Sri Ramakrishna, daily and offering pranams to him was a wonderful opportunity.

4. Staying at the Guest House was also a great experience as it gave us an opportunity to meet devotees with different religious backgrounds: Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Vedantists. These devotees

came from Australia, Malaysia, USA, Japan and Germany. We were staying together like a family and I could see *sarva dharma samanvaya* (religious harmony) put into action.

Belur Math is a special gift from Swami Vivekananda to all. Truly speaking, Belur Math exists like a shining star to guide and inspire devotees to move to their spiritual destiny. We are forever grateful. □

Holy Mother

SWAMI ASESHANANDA

Swami Areshanandaji, a disciple of the Holy Mother and a very senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order, served for many years in the Portland Centre of the Order till his demise. Eleven attractive cassettes of the Swami's inspiring talks have been brought out by the Portland Centre. For the benefit of the readers of Prabuddha Bharata, we intend to serialize them as and when transcribed. In this first of the series, the highly devout Swami speaks about how the real nature of Holy Mother was slowly revealed to him.

We are immensely grateful to Swami Shantarupanandaji of the Portland Centre for making us a gift of one set of the cassettes for the purpose, and for giving us the permission to bring them out in print in Prabuddha Bharata. The transcription was done by the Prabuddha Bharata editorial staff. The text has been only marginally edited.

We have assembled here to celebrate the birth anniversary of Sri Sarada Devi whom the devotees call Holy Mother. I had the good fortune to see her. However, when I saw her I did not understand her greatness, her unique power and her tremendous purity. After coming to America I have learnt many things from the American people: their generosity, their kindness. Also, I find in many American homes, I mean devotees' homes where I have been, they speak very feelingly about Mother. Sometimes, they say, it is very difficult to understand Sri Ramakrishna because he is unreachable. But Holy Mother is very approachable. Yet you will not find any fundamental difference between Sri Ramakrishna's teaching and Holy Mother's.

Holy Mother represents the Madonna ideal of the Catholic Church. We do not know historically how Virgin Mary lived. There is no historical account, it is out of reverence that the Catholic Church has made a tremendous doctrinal faith: 'Mother of God, please *pray* for me.' That was so because God as Mother was not accepted. God as Mother was not accepted, as was accepted God as Father. Because Christ always prayed, 'Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name' or 'Father,

to Thy hand I commend my spirit.'

Fatherhood of God signifies the dualistic philosophy of life which is known as Monotheism: the creature and the Creator; the two will remain always distinct and separate. But Motherhood of God represents Advaita. The word Advaita means man must transcend his manhood and realize his true nature as Atman. Similarly, women also must transcend their womanhood and realize their divine nature. Either you are Atman (or Brahman), or Shakti.

Holy Mother represents the *chira kumari*. *Chira kumari* means perpetual virgin. That is the [immediate] ideal which we create [before us]; and next we can think that realization of God is possible in this very life. Every other human being will imitate [these ideals] as far as possible, according to their capacity. Both these ideals — chastity and yearning for God-realization — are represented by Sri Ramakrishna and holy Mother. That is why — as one leading to the other — Sri Ramakrishna emphasizes unbroken *brahmacharya*, a spotless life without any taint from the external world. This is the first thing that comes to my mind. That is what Swami Abhedananda speaks of in his hymn on Holy Mother:

*'Pavitrām caritām yasyāḥ
pavitrām jīvanām tathā;
Pavitratā svarūpiṇyai
tasyai devyai namo namaḥ.*

*Noble has been your character,
Pure is your life divine,
Ever salutation to Mother,*

Thou Incarnate, purity personified.

We must not bring down this ideal, and through the grace of the Divine Mother this *can* be accomplished. So, Holy Mother represents the *chira kumari* ideal. You will find during Durga Puja at Belur Math, on the Ashtami day the worshipper worships a little girl of 9 or 10. It is a ritual which thousands of people attend. But Holy Mother has made that ritual authentic, meaningful, true and powerful.

Christ did not marry, he had not the problem — a married man finds it a great problem keeping his wife contented. Everybody knows that. (*laughter*) But Christ had not that problem, he did not marry. And also many monks in our Order did not marry — in my case the problem did not arise. But Sri Ramakrishna *created* a problem when he married (*laughter*), but he faced that problem very manfully, very heroically. He practised *sadhana* in Dakshineswar. Holy Mother heard in the village that her husband had lost his mental balance. So she wanted to know for herself, and she came walking all the way to Dakshineswar. And Sri Ramakrishna asked, 'Have you come to drag me down to the world of *maya*?' Holy Mother boldly said, 'I have not come to make you a *śamisari*, to make you just a worldly person. I have come to serve you, I have come to learn from you. You are my Guru. Please teach me. The path you are treading — the path of renunciation — I will also follow the same path.' Then Sri Ramakrishna allowed her to stay at Dakshineswar. In our traditional monastic orders after one takes the monastic vows through the Viraja Homa ceremony, he has to cut off all connection with his wife. She may live like a nun, but

she has to live elsewhere. But Sri Ramakrishna allowed Holy Mother to serve him. One day Holy Mother asked, 'How do you look upon me?' Sri Ramakrishna said, 'The Divine Mother Kali whom I worship in the temple, I find that the same Kali is now massaging my feet.' Kali, the Divine Mother, is Mahashakti.

If you read the life of Holy Mother you will find that Holy Mother's Chosen Ideal was Jagaddhatri, and Sri Ramakrishna's Chosen Ideal was Kali. [Both Kali and Jagaddhatri, the Chosen Ideal of Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother respectively, are Shakti.] I have mentioned in my other talks that the greatest gift of the Vedas or Vedanta philosophy is the concept of Guru. Guru is not a person, it is a state of consciousness. That means that when one reaches *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* and realizes that Atman and Brahman are identical — Advaita-jnana — he is called a Guru. That is a state of perfect identity between the individual soul and the universal soul. This ideal of the Guru is the gift of the Vedas. But the ideal of the Ishta is a gift of the Tantras. Usually this Ishta [Chosen Ideal] is Shakti, the Divine Mother, the dynamic aspect of Brahman. Guru is the transcendental aspect, *Nirguna* Brahman. So what we call the Ishta or Chosen Ideal is Shakti. They — Brahman and Shakti — are inseparable like fire and its power to burn. Sri Ramakrishna is the Guru, one who has realized Advaita-jnana. It is a state of consciousness. So from my point of view, Jesus became Christ when he realized that 'I and my Father are one' — Advaita-jnana in Jesus' teaching. Similarly, Gadadhar became Sri Ramakrishna when he attained *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* — and the great monk [Totapuri] became pleased. What he had attained after forty years Sri Ramakrishna did in one day. So here you find the Guru and the Ishta.

Now, the awakening of the *kundalini* — that is the gift of the *Tantra-shastras*. And in order to awaken the *kundalini*, this ritualistic worship helps. When we perform this exter-

nal worship, it purifies the *samskaras*. But internal worship is very important. Performance of external worship helps a little, but not completely. In order to complete the worship, one has to have *japa* and *dhyana* — *mantra-japa*. If you say: 'I have chosen a *mantra* and I will repeat it' —, no! the *mantra* must be given by a Guru. You may choose, as people sometimes say, 'Oh, this is my *mantra*. I have heard it in a lecture from this person or that, so this is my *mantra*.' That is not the way. Because the Guru himself must meditate and find out what is to be the *mantra*. That person may say, 'O my Master, this is my *mantra*, you give me that.' It is like going to a doctor and saying, 'Doctor, give me this medicine.' (laughter) No! you must keep quiet. It happened to me also. I will tell you what happened:

I was regular in going to see Maharaj — Swami Brahmananda. Swami Akhilananda was studying in the St. Paul's Cathedral Mission college. He was a disciple of Maharaj. I was fond of tennis, cricket, football, etc. at that time. And to make my body strong I used to wear Sandows and take dumbbell exercises. And then building up a career was my wish also — a brilliant career. I may go to England even to become an I.C.S. That was my father's wish. But anyway, Akhilananda said, 'You have read in books about holy men, but the person who is holy does not speak about holiness, he *lives* holiness.' 'Oh, that is alright, but my tennis is not over! I want to play three games. If you wait another three games it will be six games.' But I could not always win [in tennis]. I was short. In tennis, tall men have an advantage. Anyway, those were the old days. It all looks like a dream now.

And this [Raja] Maharaj gave us the idea that young people should renounce. Although at that time we were also very interested to bring about the independence of India — there was the Abhayashram group, both Swami Nikhilananda and I used to go —, it was Maharaj who said, 'Renun-

ciation is necessary. It will help you to build up your character.' So, I used to go to Maharaj every week. on two days we were allowed, Saturdays and Sundays.

Then one day — it may be a Saturday or a Sunday, I am not sure — Maharaj was not there in Balaram Bose's house. I came to know that he will take dinner in a devotee's house and come a little late, maybe 10 o'clock or 11 o'clock. Then some devotees came and said, 'Holy Mother has come from Jayrambati.' Holy Mother was living in the village. She would come to Calcutta, usually like when Swami Saradananda called her. Sometimes she would not come. But [on this occasion] Mother came from Jayrambati to Udbodhan. That is also called Mother's House — *Māyer Bāḍī*. So the devotees said, 'We are going to see Holy Mother. She has come from Jayrambati. Would you like to go?' In those days, for anything I would consult with Swami Akhilananda: 'They say Holy Mother has come. Why not go?' He said, 'No, I have got an appointment with a senior swami, you go. I have seen her. You have not seen her, so you go.' So I went.

I was in the office, when Kestolal Maharaj (Swami Dhirananda) asked me this question: 'I have seen you many times in Balaram Bose's house. Who will take your responsibility?' The Bengali words are '*Bhār nebe ke?*' *Bhār* means responsibility, *nebe* take, *ke* who. At that time I was very fascinated by Western ideas. That is why I chose that Western Christian College.... I was enamoured of Western civilization. I used to feel [my] individuality. 'What, I must do something *myself*; nobody should help.' I also read Kant, Hegel and these great German philosophers. I said, 'Maharaj, why should another person take my responsibility? It is a sign of weakness — another person taking my responsibility. Why not take responsibility myself?' So he said in reply, 'You do not know anything of spiritual life.' He gave the example of a cave temple. In India there are cave temples. If you want to see a cave tem-

ple — it is all dark inside — you need a torch or flashlight as you call it here. Suppose somebody holds a flashlight and shows you the way, then you can see the deity and you will come unharmed. But if there is no flashlight, you will bump your head against the wall, and you will come back bruised and hurt. So he said and then I understood a little. Yet I said, 'If it is necessary I will go see Maharaj and probably I will ask him, "Maharaj, please give me initiation."'

What you want [to progress spiritually] is initiation. In spiritual life it is called Guru. There should be a relationship between the Guru and the disciple. And this is established through a religious ceremony called initiation — which means, initiated into a new life.

So anyway I said, 'I will get initiated by Maharaj, when I feel the need of it.' Then he said, 'It is difficult to get from Maharaj, because Maharaj will give some instruction and if you do not do it, then probably you will have to wait for many years. But Mother is very kind. Why don't you approach her and ask her to bless you?'

In the mean time, one young brahmachari came. 'Well, those who want to see Mother come with me.' Lady devotees could go everyday, but for men Thursdays and Saturdays — these were the two days they were allowed to see Mother. And he gave some instructions and said, 'There is a staircase next to Golap Ma's room. Take that staircase and go to the shrine. You must not talk. And [here is] what you will do: you touch her feet, and come by the other staircase. In front of Saradanandaji's room there is a passage, a verandah. Take that passage and come by the other staircase.' There were so many people, a crowd you could say. So I did as he instructed. Mother had a veil and I did not see her face — only feet. I bowed down, touched and came.

Then Kestolal Maharaj said, 'Well, did you ask Mother for her blessing?' 'Maharaj, I just did what our brahmachari guide asked

me to do.' Then he called out, 'Rashbehari, Rashbehari' — Swami Arupananda — you read one of his reminiscences in Tapasyananda's book in which Nikhilananda has translated the conversations of Holy Mother. Rashbehari Maharaj came. 'Here, take this boy.' And as Swami Dhirananda was fond of brahmins, he first said, 'He is a *Brahmin* boy, and he studies in a college. He is very intelligent. Take him to Mother and ask Mother to shower her grace on him.' So, I went in, and this time I could see Mother's face. Rashbehari Maharaj said, 'He goes to Maharaj every week. He knows Maharaj.' However, Mother said, 'Well, Rakhal can give, Rakhal can give.' In those days not Swami Saradananda, not Swami Shivananda, not Swami Premananda — only two persons, Holy Mother and Maharaj — these two [gave *mantra*]. 'Rakhal can give. *Rakhal to dite pāre*. He is entitled, he is qualified and the boy knows him.' Then somehow or other — this I call God's blessing — I said, 'Mother if you give me, it will be my *mahāsaubhāgya*, my great good fortune.' Somehow or other I said so, I did not think of it. All of a sudden it came out, as it were. 'It will be a great good fortune, Mother, if you bless me,' I said. Mother agreed and said, 'Come after two days. Do not take your breakfast. Take your bath in the Ganges.' That was a very auspicious day. 'And wait downstairs and I will call you.' Then I came down. For me it was all matter-of-fact. It just happened. It did not create any tremendous enthusiasm in my heart. But Swami Dhirananda was pleased, supremely pleased.

Then I asked Swami Akhilananda, 'I do not know what is initiation. What am I expected to do? Just to present myself there? Mother just told me to go and take bath and not to take any breakfast.' He said, 'All right, all right.' 'But am I expected to do something?' Then he said, 'Yes, I will tell you.' Then the previous evening we went to the College Street market and bought some flowers, fruits, sweets and a thin red-bor-

dered cloth. And he said, 'Give some money also as *guru-dakshina*.'

That night Swami Akhilananda said in the course of a conversation, 'You see, do not suggest anything — what is your *Ishta*, understand? Do not say, "I like this, I like that." You see, we are Hindus. We say, 'I like Shiva' or say, 'No, no, I do not like Shiva (*laughter*). Oh, Shiva! He has got matted locks and dust all over his body. Ugly! Ashes on his body! What is this thing — dust on the body! No, I do not want Shiva. On the other hand, I like Krishna with a flute in his hand,' and all that. So I too liked a certain aspect of God, you see, for some time. If I am to think of God, then I shall have to think according to our Hindu traditions. I belonged to a certain traditional family of Brahmins. I had some kind of idea. So for a long time I could not sleep. 'Must I not say *anything* and just take initiation? No, I *must* say, "Mother, I like this better." Let *her* do whatever she likes.' So like that my mind was reflecting; pros and cons were going on. Then I went to sleep.

The next day, Mother asked me some questions and she gave the *Ishta-mantra*. The Guru and the *Ishta* — these are important things. I found that Mother is great. She knows my heart, she knows that this is the aspect I like. You see the one God has many aspects, many facets. Particularly, take for example, Fatherhood of God. Westerners like Fatherhood of God. But here I find some Western people, after reading the life of Sri Ramakrishna, because he was constantly saying, 'My Mother Kali, Kali my Mother', they have become fond of the Mother aspect also. So Mother gave me the *mantra* after my heart and asked, 'Will you take *prasad*?' That means, 'Will you sit for *prasad* which will be at about 12 o'clock?' I said, 'No, Mother. I have not taken the permission. I have permission only for the morning session.' That college was very strict. Suppose in your room — it was a single room — you left the light burning. *Fine*, 50 cents fine! So we be-

came very careful. And they had caution money. If in the laboratory you break anything, the caution money which you gave will go to them. But I liked those Fathers, they were very nice. They were good disciplinarians, but they were very kind, very kind. I remember.

So this Swami Akhilananda — I am grateful to him for taking me to Maharaj, and afterwards to Mother. Mother blessed me. Next Rashbehari Maharaj helped me, because at that time I did not know that you need *rudraksha* beads [to keep count]. Rashbehari Maharaj told me, 'Swami Shantarupananda told me that you need beads. Mother has shown you [to keep count on] only the fingers, but you need also the beads. I will bring the beads and string them together for you.' So, Rashbehari Maharaj did all that. He asked me to advance some money. On a particular day I went to Mother for *sodhana*. Mother sanctified [the rosary] by repeating the name of God and then gave [it to] me. I asked Mother a little about meditation. Then Mother said to me, 'When there is any doubt or difficulty, you ask Rashbehari Maharaj; he will help you.'

So at that time I did not know that Mother was Divine Mother herself. But when I became the private secretary of Swami Saradananda, he would dictate to me [his letters]. If a disciple [of his] said, 'I have forgotten the *mantra*', that Swami Saradananda would write in his own hand. Otherwise, the rest of the instructions I would. So, from writing those instructions given by Swami Saradananda to his disciples I found there was a kind of method — first step, second step, third step, like that [in meditation].

I gradually became close to Swami Saradananda. At first I was very afraid. On the day I saw Mother first, I left my shoes at the threshold. And Swami Saradananda scolded me, 'You are so careless! Why didn't you keep your shoes where they belong, under the staircase?' And he was such a

grave figure. I was tremendously afraid of him. But through Mother's grace that distance disappeared. I became close to Swami Saradananda. I could go to his room any-time. Even if he was meditating, he would open his eyes a little sometimes to see who had come. He did not scold me. The first day he scolded, but afterwards when I became his attendant he was *so kind, so sweet, and so loving — so loving*.

So anyway, to see Swami Saradananda, you have to go after his meditation. He will then be in a very good mood. He will be just like a mother, very kind, very affectionate, very sweet — no scolding, no finding of faults or anything (*laughter*). So, one day I was waiting for his meditation to be over and for him to be relaxing with his pipe. Here you smoke cigarettes, but there it is not like that. He was relaxing and I bowed down to him. First we bow down. Then he asked, 'Why, why are you bowing down today? What, is anything special?' Swami Saradananda wanted us to bow down to him only on special days, like Holy Mother's birthday, Sri Ramakrishna's birthday — not everyday. But in Belur Math we used to go and bow down to Mahapurush Maharaj everyday. But not so in Udbodhan to Swami Saradananda. Those who came from Math used to bow down. So, he asked, 'What, why are you prostrating before me today? What is the matter?' Then I said, 'Maharaj, you see, Holy Mother did not tell me that I will have to repeat this *mantra* 108 times. She did not give me any method. But I find that when you instruct your disciples there is a method. So, would you kindly give me a method?' Then he said, 'You are the greatest fool I have ever seen. Mother is *Jagajjanani* — she is the Universal Mother — and whatever she has given, that is the last word in spiritual life, and you just cling to that and think of Holy Mother. She will do everything for you.' And so that day I understood that Holy Mother was not just a saintly woman, she was the Divine Mother herself.

Then, Golap Ma: I was serving Golap Ma; she was having heart trouble, palpitation of the heart. I said to Golap Ma, 'Golap Ma, you have served Holy Mother, but I have not understood her.' It was so difficult for me, because she was hiding herself, all her power and glory. She had tremendous power, but I did not feel that power. That she was the Divine Mother, I did not feel. I was thinking of her just as a human mother, very kind, very sweet. In those days I had an idea that there must be a doctorate degree, a master's degree (*laughter*) — a diploma, degree or some kind of university certificate or something. Then Golap Ma said, 'Oh, not only you. I too could not understand her although I have seen her, served her, lived with her for many, many years. It is so difficult. But if she showers her grace, then you can understand a little.'

Sri Ramakrishna left Dakshineswar and first came to Syampukur. Then Mahendra Lal Sarkar said that the climate of Calcutta was not good and he should be taken to a better place. Therefore the devotees found for him the Cossipore garden-house, where he entered *Mahasamadhi*. So, it was in Syampukur where Golap Ma said to Yogin Ma that Sri Ramakrishna went to Syampukur because Holy Mother was feeding him too much — too much food and all that. That is the reason why the Master was not fully satisfied, and therefore he came to Calcutta. Holy Mother, who was in the *nahabat*, heard it. She did not at first come to Syampukur. As soon as Holy Mother heard this from some lady devotee, she hired a carriage and came to Sri Ramakrishna and asked him this question: 'Were you not satisfied with my service at Dakshineswar? Is that why you have come down to Syampukur?' 'Who told you so? I did not even dream of it! Your service was quite pleasing, it was excellent. I never said that. Let that Brahmin woman come, I will teach her a lesson!'

The next day Golap Ma came. Sri Ramakrishna asked, 'Did you say that?' 'Oh,

I heard that from somebody and inadvertently I talked to Yogin,' and all that. 'Do you know who she is? DO YOU KNOW WHOSHE IS?' *Sārādā, Saraswatī, jñān dite eśeche.* She is the Divine Mother herself, the giver of wisdom. She can give illumination by a touch, by a wish. If she simply lays her hand on any person's head, he will get illumination. She has that kind of power. Sarada! Saraswati! — Saraswati is a Vedic deity. Kali came in the Tantric age. Then, to Golap Ma he said, 'Go and ask pardon of her. If she does not forgive you, you will have no place here. Remember this!'

Golap Ma said to me, 'I cried all the way. Walked all the way, and cried and cried, and fell at the feet of Holy Mother in the *nahabat* at Dakshineswar. "Mother, please forgive me. I have said this inadvertently." Then Mother patted her on the back and said, 'A mother does not see the faults of her children.' A mother is a mother always, under all circumstances. Earlier, Sri Ramakrishna had asked the Holy Mother to feed the grief-stricken Golap Ma whenever she came to Dakshineswar. And he also told Holy Mother that Golap Ma would be her constant companion. And both of them — Golap Ma and Holy Mother — became very close. Golap Ma was always with Holy Mother. In a sense she was like her body-guard. She protected Mother on many occasions. So we find that she was Saraswati — *Sārādā, Saraswatī, jñān dite eśeche.*

I have also heard from Golap Ma this: As I have mentioned of Sri Ramakrishna's *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*, similarly Holy Mother also had *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*. Mother, Golap Ma and Yogin Ma were once meditating in a rented house on the bank of the Ganges — maybe Nilambar Babu's house or somewhere. They were meditating and Mother went into *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*. Then Golap Ma and Yogin Ma waited for some time so that Mother's mind should come down to the normal plane. Then when her mind came

down a little, she said, 'Where is my body? Where is my body?' Then Golap Ma touched her feet and Yogin Ma touched her hand and said, 'This is your hand, Mother. These are your feet.' So, Mother had *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*. Here we find that she was *Jñānādāyini*, which means she was the giver of Advaita knowledge, non-dual experience of God, which is known as *Nirguna Brahman*.

However, Holy Mother's special charm or excellence or beauty is her *Karuṇā*, compassion. That is the reason why Holy Mother said, 'Do not see the faults of others.' This she said to Annapurna's mother. Mother was very sick in Udbodhan for six months. Six months she was under treatment. It was ordinary malaria, and then it developed into *Kala Azar* — black fever. And the doctor who discovered it was a Christian, P.D. Bose. ... It was he who diagnosed that Mother has *Kala Azar* — black fever. Six months Mother had to suffer.... Swami Saradananda writes in his diary: 'I am now at the end of my tether. I do not know what to do.' Then he had *Śānti Svastyayana* performed. It is something like faith-cure, a kind of worship. Kapil Maharaj performed that worship, but ultimately nothing could help Mother.

Now, Annapurna's mother was crying, 'When you go away what will happen to us?' 'You have seen Sri Ramakrishna, why are you afraid? Come, come.', she said, because nobody was allowed to enter. Everybody had to prostrate from the threshold, from the door. However, Mother could not talk in a loud voice, her voice had become very soft. 'My child, do not see faults of others, *Doṣ dekho nā*. Make the world your own. Nobody is a stranger, nobody is alien.' That is Mother's last message — *Doṣ dekho nā*. Try to see God in every person, the good qualities in every person. If you are good, you see good — goodness in others. There is a saying in Hindi: *Āp bhalā to jagat bhalā* — if you are good, the world is good. We project

our ideas on the rest of the world and if one has found God within, he will find the same God dwelling in other hearts.

And what is the meaning of Holy Mother's words: 'Come, come'? That means 'come home from the world'. In the Bible, the prodigal son, he goes into the broad world and he loses everything. Then he returns. Christ speaks about the return of the prodigal son. Similarly, Mother says 'come, come'. She is praying for each one of us, 'come home, come home'. That means, think of God and realize Him, because God dwells in the heart.

Even the great scientist Einstein, he said, 'All these discoveries I have done, but the great longing of my heart is to know the thought of God.' You can know the thought of God when you see God. How can you know the thought of God? When you see Him, you ask Him, 'What is in your mind?' (*laughter*). He will tell you because God will consider you as His very own. You have taken so much trouble to meet Him (*laughter*), giving up all attachment to the world of *maya*. So this is the message of Christ, this is the message of Holy Mother, this is the message of Sri Ramakrishna — 'Come home, come home.' The world is our foreign place, a strange land. But, you see, 'coming home' does not mean you go to heaven after death. No, in this very life we can feel the presence of God and realize Him, that He is the pole star of life. Mariners used to see the pole star and be able to reach the harbour. Similarly we will be able to reach the destination.

So Mother, in our Order, is considered to be Shakti — the dynamic aspect of God. Sri Ramakrishna represents the *Nirguna* aspect. *Nirguna* means attributeless, the Absolute. That means when you go into *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*, then you will understand the real meaning of Sri Ramakrishna. But it is only through the grace of Holy Mother that you will be able to realize the goal — the goal of Jivan-mukti [liberated-in-life] or immor-

talidity. So Mother is very kind. Now I understand what Swami Dhirananda meant: '*Mother is very kind.*' Sri Ramakrishna, in a sense, is the method. As Swami Vijnanananda said, 'It is difficult to please Sri Ramakrishna.' Because he is the method. It needs precision. It needs tremendous *sadhana* to purify the mind from all the blemishes of the world. But Mother is the symbol of grace, and that is the reason why Holy Mother said, 'If my children roll in the dust, being their mother I will have to accept my children and remove the dust and raise their consciousness to a higher plane where they find peace in the midst of the peacelessness of the world.'

It is our belief that although Holy Mother left her mortal coil, or left her body, in 1920, but appeared before M. I want to say this also: Mother, even today, she is doing *japa*, as when she was alive. I have heard from Kishori Maharaj, who was her attendant. Mother used to get up very early in the morning and do *japa*. 'Because my children cannot do that; I will have to do it for them.' So Mother's way is doing *japa*.

There is a beautiful little book — those who are interested can read — *Holy Mother, the Great Wonder* [published] from Delhi. Swami Budhananda collected all that. You need someone to say, take initiation. In that book it mentions Swami Madhavananda — it was Swami Ramakrishnananda who told him 'you must go and take initiation. Then you will achieve the realization of God.' Then Swami Vireswarananda: Baburam Maharaj (Premananda) [told him]: 'Go to Jayrambati and take initiation.' Then Bharat Maharaj, he is still alive. Baburam Maharaj [told him].

Holy Mother is inseparable from Sri Ramakrishna. And that is why Swami Saradananda has written about her: *Agnerdāhikāśaktiriva rāmakṛṣṇe sthitā hi yā, Sar-*

svavidyāsvarūpām tām śāradām pranamāmyaham. Swami Saradananda used to say, 'I am a *dvāri*, gatekeeper in the house of Mother. Everything belongs to her.' He was so humble. A person prostrated before him. He asked, 'Why this ceremonial prostration?' 'Oh, you are Mother's guardian, chief-guardian, chief-attendant,' was the reply. He said, 'Listen, you have got the grace of Mother. If Mother once places you in my position, you will do work of the same kind or even better.' A person like Swami Saradananda spoke like that. It is all her power. Even Swami Vivekananda did not come to the West until he received a mandate from her. He wrote to Holy Mother, and Holy Mother said, 'Yes, go. You will be successful, because you are doing Sri Ramakrishna's work.' So you find that whatever our different centres are doing, in their hearts they pay homage to Sri Ramakrishna as the ideal Guru and Holy Mother as the ideal Ishta. Guru and Ishta — Guru is Brahman and Ishta is like His Shakti, Power of Brahman. So Saradananda said, '*Agneḥ dāhikā śaktiriva.*' As fire and its burning power are both inseparable, you cannot disconnect Shiva and Shakti, they are always connected. *Agneḥ dāhikā śaktiriva rāmakṛṣṇe sthītā hi yā* — who is established in Sri Ramakrishna. *Sarvavidyā svarūpām tām: Sarvavidyā* means *Parā-vidyā*. *Parā-vidyā* means that which gives *Mokṣa*, Liberation. *Sarvavidyā* means *Brahma-vidyā*, the ground of all kinds of knowledge. Phenomenal knowledge will not give you *Jivan-mukti*; science and technology cannot give you *Mukti*. Knowledge of Atman, that you belong to God, that you ultimately realize that 'I and my Mother are one' — this is *Advaita-jnana*. If you want to have the Knowledge of Atman, then *Sarvavidyāsvarūpām tām śāradām pranamāmyaham*. So Mother has the key to *Brahma-jnana*.

We learn the following from Maharaj. Maharaj once came to Benares. Mother was

probably living in Kiran Dutta's house in Benares. Swami Saradananda also lived there along with Yogin Ma. One day Holy Mother told Golap Ma, 'Rakhal has come. Ask him this question: Why Mother worship must be done in all the different kinds of worship?' Maharaj said, 'Because Mother holds the key to *Brahma-jnana*.' You cannot attain it simply by your own *sadhana*. Mother opens the door, she holds the key. The other day our Brahmachari kept the key inside the car and somebody said, 'Swami, we should have a master key.' Then if any car is stalled here, if people do not find the key, your master key will open. So the master key is in the hand of God.

So when Einstein says, 'I want to know the thought of God', [the answer is,] 'You see God. He will tell what is in His mind.' And to us Holy Mother is gracious and kind; if we ask her with great sincerity and earnestness, she will open the door to illumination and we will be able to realize God. Maharaj too said that: 'because Mother holds the key to *Brahma-jnana*'. It is exactly what the *Chandi* also says: *Saiṣā prasannā varadā nṛṇāṃ bhavati muktaye. Saiṣā prasannā* — That great Mother, when she is gracious, *prasannā* and *varadā*. She comes [on earth] to give the boon of protection, the boon of fearlessness. Then she opens the door to liberation, she removes all the obstacles and also with her kind hand she leads us from darkness to Light, from death to Immortality, from bondage to Freedom.

And so it is our prayer on this auspicious day: May Holy Mother bless us all so that we too, through her grace, surmount all difficulties and reach our destined goal which is the realization of God; that by realizing God, we attain self-fulfilment and are inspired to serve our fellow human beings as symbols and expressions of the Divine Spirit whom we have known and experienced in the throne of the heart. May Holy Mother bless us all. □

Swami Shivananda, A Living Light

SWAMI SHRADDHANANDA

We are grateful to Ms. Lalita Parvati Maly of California for communicating to us the text of a talk given in Sacramento by Swami Shraddhanandaji on his revered Guru, Swami Shivanandaji, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. Not published so far, the speech is replete with many portrayals of Swami Shivanandaji Maharaj and of the speaker in his many interactions with his revered Guru.

His name was Shivananda, which stands for jnani, and formerly in his monastic life he was a very stern person — so stern in fact, that he did not like anyone's company. From the time of the death of Swami Brahmananda however, when Swami Shivananda became the second President of the Ramakrishna Order, he began to grow very sweet and affectionate. People who previously had dreaded meeting him, now remarked, 'Oh, now he has become the Guru. What a change has come over him!' Towards the end of his life he became — like Swami Vivekananda — outwardly all jnana, but inwardly, full of love and devotion. In him was a beautiful combination, a harmony of the two.

He had been President for about two years when I first met him in 1924. I was a college student then, living in Calcutta, but had been coming to the monastery for about one year, and was acquainted with some of the monks. Of course I had heard of Swami Shivananda from a friend of mine who was his disciple, but during this year Swami Shivananda had been absent from the monastery on a tour to different parts of India. It happened to be a day of great religious festivities, the *Shivaratri*, when the whole night is passed in the worship of Lord Shiva, and in all parts of India that particular day is observed. A group of young students had come from Calcutta to the Math to pass the night singing songs and watching this worship. It was then that we heard that Swami

Shivananda had arrived at the monastery a few days before. At this news, we waited with great anticipation in the vast crowd gathered for the occasion.

About an hour before evening, Swami Shivananda came downstairs. My first impression was that he was very old. He was about seventy-one years old, but not all of his hair had turned gray. He was a very tall person, about six feet, and very well-built. In his bearing there was something unique. He was very fair, with a broad face, and there was not a wrinkle in his face. Some devotees were present who were elderly, and he was talking with them. They had naturally mentioned the *Shivaratri*, and he responded, 'Yes, this is surely a holy day.' His face was beaming with an inner joy. He appeared to be inspired and he encouraged the devotees to stay all night and see all the worship. He was very cordial, all the time smiling, with a wondrous glow in his eyes.

My friend, who was a disciple of Swami Shivananda, introduced me. 'Maharaj,' he said, 'This boy has been coming to the monastery for some time.' 'Oh, yes. Very nice. Very nice.'

When we come face to face with a spiritual personality, a person who has seen God, who has attained perfect Self-knowledge, then we can at once see the Truth beaming in his face. When he talks, in his words there is a strange power. I felt this, although I was but a boy.

Now and then I used to come to the

monastery, and I would meet him. Not many visitors used to come to the monastery in those days. It was a very quiet time, and we used to go by steamer to Belur Math. It was a great recreation for us. Maharaj allowed us to sit near him. One day he said, 'You are sitting here without uttering any words. Ask me something. Ask me something.'

'Maharaj,' I responded, 'my mind is not concentrated. I cannot bring that concentration.' 'Go on, my boy, be patient. Go on. Surely concentration will come. It is not a question of one or two days.'

One day we took a lady with us so she could come for spiritual instruction. She had suffered a lot in worldly life. She asked Swami Shivananda about preparations for initiation, and at once Swami Shivananda said, 'What I want is life. Can you bring your life to me? Your whole life has to be given to God. So far as the ordinary rituals, nothing is necessary. Just bring one fruit. That will be enough.' The lady was puzzled, but his sweetness, of course, gave her great consolation.

Once a college boy came. He lived in a distant village. He was a disciple of Swami Shivananda. Swami Shivananda saw him. 'Who are you?' he inquired. The boy was puzzled. Swami Shivananda was smiling and said, 'Do you know who I am?' The boy was still more puzzled. 'I am that eternal Spirit. I am that Self, that birthless and deathless Spirit. Do you know that?' 'No, sir.' The Swami continued, 'By the grace of God, some day you will know, if you pursue your spiritual practices. Whose disciple are you?' Nervously, the boy thought, 'My Guru has forgotten me.' When Swami Shivananda repeated his question, the boy replied, puzzled, 'Swami, you. You gave me *mantram*.' At once Swami Shivananda became serious. 'No, no. I am not the Guru. You see, none of us is the Guru. Guru is He. Anyone coming, we take him to Him, and He takes the responsibility.'

This much I remember, even though I was a boy. I used to feel that his presence was delightful, and after returning to Calcutta, there was an elevation in my mind. The mind was in a high state — definitely a change from the usual state — a state of great joy. Even though at first I had not many questions to ask of him, and had not the understanding to see and probe into the spiritual personality, this much I felt that if I could sit near him for one hour, it was good.

He was very kind and gracious. I was a university student, and so I didn't have much opportunity for prolonged contact with him. But out of boyish curiosity, I began to put occasional questions to him and he would with all seriousness answer. Once I spoke of a problem.

'Maharaj,' I began, 'I cannot just bring into harmony the idea of a Guru. Some say that when you meditate, when you repeat your *mantram*, the Guru has also to be brought into the picture. I can't understand why Guru should be respected and brought into the picture of meditation.'

He was very patient with me. 'You need not bother too much about Guru,' he replied. 'But through some medium you received that special instruction, so you should have some respect for that medium through which you have received the instruction.'

Throughout this period, my friend had been insisting that I seek spiritual instruction from Swami Shivananda. I had some inclination for monastic life, to be sure, and had it in mind, of course, to enter the monastic life eventually, but I was not prepared right then. I had no clear ideas about spiritual initiation and up to this time, had wanted to wait and see what developed. Furthermore, I was studying in the university and was having my troubles there. I was having to struggle very hard in my science course because, unfortunately, in the previous examination I had done very poorly,

and had not received the scholarship I had hoped for. Therefore, in addition to my usual studies, I had to be a tutor [to earn money], and so in those days I could not spare much time for spiritual practice—at most, half an hour in the morning and half an hour in the evening. But my friend was insistent. He urged me not to lose time. One day I asked Swami Shivananda for initiation. He smiled, but refused. ‘This is not a very good time,’ he replied. It was the last month of the Indian year. ‘This is the last month. The old year is going away. Wait till the new year comes.’ And then he asked me whether I had read the literature and asked some questions. ‘Don’t be eager. Wait till the new year,’ he repeated.

On the first day of the new year I went to him. Since it was a holiday, there were many crowds to see him. ‘Oh, you have come on the first day. All right. Come tomorrow.’ He smiled. ‘You come.’

Of course, I was glad and I went the next day. He gave me some spiritual instructions, but what I received was so very simple that it was a disappointment. But, as I said, I was just a boy and now as I recall those things, I think what a fool I was.

On Buddha’s birthday in April, the thrice-blessed day, the full moon day of the first month of the year, I attended the ceremony at the monastery as an innocent onlooker, not knowing that my friends had plans for me. My friend remarked, ‘What a fool you are, studying. You will take a Master’s degree, but what about your spiritual life? Swami Shivananda is so old and you should reap the benefit of his living presence. What are you doing?’ Being rather shy, I was not very assertive, and when some of the other Swamis joined him, it suddenly occurred to me that here, perhaps, was a way of avoiding all the troubles at the university, and of making me out at the same time to be a virtuous man. Under pressures from without and within, I submitted. ‘All right. This is a nice suggestion.’

Quickly that friend continued, ‘If you really have a spirit of renunciation, don’t go back to Calcutta. Stay here.’ And I found I really wanted to stay. I thought Swami Shivananda would welcome the idea, but he didn’t. He became grave, and he stared at me. ‘Yes, I know this boy, and I am not sure he is ready. But let the Swamis decide.’

One of my friends was the monk who was private secretary to Swami Shivananda. He went around to all the other monks, and he made everything straight. Then he came back and said to Swami Shivananda, ‘Yes, they have all accepted him.’ Maharaj gave me his blessing. It was then that my trials began.

Some of my friends said, ‘Well, what are you doing? Passing so much time in meditation and *japam*. While the Guru is living, you should do some personal service.’ I had found that many old *samskaras* are kindled when you take such a step as this, and so I thought meditation and prayer were more important. Besides, there were so many other Swamis for personal service. My friends would not listen to me. Gradually, of course, the idea began to take root.

One day I went with the idea of doing personal service to the Guru. Swami Shivananda had the habit of smoking the hubble-bubble. At home, my father was a veteran tobacco smoker, and at one time I had prepared his tobacco. So hopefully I said, ‘Sir, I would like to prepare your tobacco.’ Delighted, he asked, ‘Do you know how to prepare tobacco? All right. Try.’

But it had been a long time since I had prepared tobacco for my father, and I found that I had forgotten how. It was only by the grace of one of the other monks who rescued me as I was floundering, that I managed to complete that task.

Still, my friends kept after me. ‘Every evening,’ they insisted, ‘you come right to Swami Shivananda’s room and do some personal service.’

He was ailing by this time. He was

about seventy-six years old and his health was failing. There was no electric fan and so he had to be fanned in the summer.

For two or three days I did that service. I had continued to wear my normal dress. Wearing the monastic robes would come after passing the period of the probationer. My friends had said, 'Why should you look like a student? You are no longer a student. You should shave your head and leave a tuft of hair as *Brahmacharis* do in the back.' I did as they said. But, I had no instruction from my Guru to do so, and so he stared at me. 'Who is this? That boy. He has become a holy man.'

Then, after two or three days, he said, 'I see, my boy, that you are not prepared yet to do this personal service, so I think you had better spend the time in meditation. That would be more beneficial for you.' My vanity was injured. Many thoughts were racing around in my mind, and after some days I went to him.

'Maharaj, do you think I am not prepared for this life? Do you think I should go back and finish my studies?' 'My idea,' he answered gently, 'was that you have just come, and that you spend more time in meditation. That will be of more benefit to you. Not that I want you to go back. You will remain here.' He was encouraging to me.

Much later, when I used to reflect on these things, I found what a grace he had. He knew this boy was not prepared, but he said, 'Let him have a chance.'

My problems and questions continued. I remember in the early years of my staying at the Math, I had another problem — of the Holy Mother — so one day I asked him, 'Maharaj, what is the place of the Holy Mother?' In those days, very few knew about Holy Mother. It was the custom of the devotees to keep their Mother in secret, in the heart. He stared at me, and closed his eyes, and said, 'Sri Ramakrishna is identical with Holy Mother.'

There were trials in my studies, too. Of

course, there were many Sanskrit classes and the Upanishad classes where I had become a regular student. Naturally many questions would come, and I thought, 'Since I am here, I must utilize my Guru.' Once, being very confused by some of the things I had read in the Sanskrit books, I asked Swami Shivananda, 'Maharaj, there are two paths. Which is the better path to follow?'

He replied, 'If you want the path of knowledge, you can have that, and you will have *mukti*. And there is also the path of devotion, and if you want that, you can have that. That is the path you will take if you want a combination of love and knowledge. Knowledge is the harder path to follow. But the best thing is perfect self-abandonment. Say, "Lord, Lord, I am Thine; if it be Thy will that I have *mukti*, or that I have devotion, let it be up to Thee." Perfect self-abandonment in the Lord. That is *the* thing.'

Then one day, after I had asked him many questions, he said, 'You are asking these questions as if it were a mathematical problem. Your questions are very superficial, and you have not the understanding to put a regular question.' All my vanity was being crushed. He knew I had that sense of vanity, and so sometimes he would say, 'These university boys are worthless. They think that they have passed this B.S., but they are quite impractical and are worthless.' Still, patiently, he would continue.

'You are a mere boy now. You must just go on and live this life, and if you can live this life for seven or eight years, then much will come. This life is quite a different life. You should not have the same kind of ambition as getting a college degree. One struggles hard for years, and has ups and downs, and so you must have patience, you must have patience.'

Again, one day he asked me, 'What are you studying now?' I answered, 'The Upanishads.' 'Upanishads? Does it not conflict with your devotion?' Then I was really confused. 'No, not much.' Swami Shivananda

explained, 'These ideas of *Advaita* must be carefully approached, and a life of devotion must be lived.'

Then, gradually, what he had expected began to happen. I began to think, 'What is this personal God?' One day I asked, 'I have a question, Maharaj. Well, I do my *japam* and meditation, but sometimes I don't like the idea of a personal God. Even the name of God seems not at all pleasing to me. I want to repeat only the word *Om* without the idea of a personal God.' He was very grave and very sad, and kept quiet for some time. 'All right, my boy. There are two ways for the realization of God. One is the path of knowledge, and the other is the path of devotion. There is no contradiction between the two. In the beginning they seem to be different. You need not repeat the *mantram*, but don't think the personal God is different from the impersonal God. Rather, you should first pray to the personal Deity and then you go on to *Om*.' He did not quite encourage the idea, but he subdued me that way. After doing that for some time, I thought it was foolish. But he would say, smiling, 'All right. Go on, go on.'

I remember one of the *Sadhus* was studying the *Mandukya Upanishad*, which doesn't recognize God or anything but the Self. The position is very rational. One night Swami Shivananda asked him, 'What are you studying? Does it contain my Mother's name? I don't care for the *Mandukya Upanishad*. Knowledge has to have devotion, otherwise one is liable to be led astray any moment.' That was a revelation to me.

So these things went on. I was not wholly dependent on him, and incident after incident accumulated. Although he was always loving, kind and affectionate, he later on decided, 'This boy requires some other medicine.' He scolded me, and he said, 'You are a selfish boy, and you think you will have spiritual life in the way you are used to having in the world.'

But though he scolded me severely, I

bore it well, because by that time I knew he was my well-wisher, and he did it for my good. Some of the other Swamis were very sorry for me. 'Why has he scolded you so severely?' 'I cannot recall anything I did that would offend him. Of course, I am all the time asking questions.'

One day he said, 'You must sweep this whole courtyard in addition to your studies.' It would take more than an hour with a broom and he would notice me from his room in the morning. The other *Sadhus* felt very sad for me.

But matters got worse. As I went to salute him, he would not answer, but became very grave. He was very cheerful until I put in my appearance and then he would lapse into silence. By that time, I had matured a little. I thought this was my trial and I would not fail. I would stand it. With all reverence I would stand it. He was usually so cordial. He would get up at 3 a.m. and do his meditation and by 6 o'clock he was all through and ready to receive the Swamis. The tea bell would ring at 6.30 a.m. Being in his room in the morning with all the *Sadhus* was really a place of pilgrimage. Of course, no devotees from Calcutta would come at that early hour. From 5.30 to 6.30 a.m. would be reserved for the monastic inmates, and he would receive them with so much affection, and that was their food for the day. 'My son, how are you? My child, how are you?'

Just a few words and a kind look and that worked on the mind of everyone that used to come. By that time his illness had increased. He was confined in his room and could not come down. But he radiated love. It was an hour of great joy and inspiration. However, whenever I appeared, he had not a word for me. I thought, 'What is this?'

It continued about a fortnight. The others urged me to go and apologize, but I said, 'No, I don't know what I have done. But I shall bear it, because I know he is my well-wisher.' Then one day suddenly he spoke, and he smiled, saying, 'My boy, you see,

Self-knowledge, the knowledge of *Atman*, is, after all, the knowledge of God. God can give you, Self-knowledge, but it cannot be wrested from Him. So humility must be practised. Every day you should go to the shrine and in all humility pray to Sri Ramakrishna to give you humility, and then you will be ready for Self-knowledge. It isn't merely studying the Upanishads or just some vain arguments and vain reasoning. Self-knowledge will come when the heart is ready. For you it is necessary to go on that path of devotion. Don't think Self-knowledge won't come. It will come, but it will come through devotion.'

There were other Swamis present, and they said, 'Oh, Maharaj. You have been so hard on him.' 'I am his Guru,' replied Swami Shivananda simply. 'I have to correct him. I knew the boy was going on the wrong path, and was going astray.'

Gradually his health was weakened by high blood pressure and asthma, and deteriorated. He was almost an invalid. He used to live on the second floor of the monastery. The doctors forbade him to come down, even to climb two flights of stairs. However, sometimes he would come outside and would walk on the terrace slowly. Physically he was almost an invalid, but when you went to him you found his mind was far above his body. It was as though he was bodiless while in his body. If someone would ask, 'How are you, Maharaj?' he would reply, 'Are you asking about my body? Body is aching, body is old, but I am all right. I am all right. I am not the body. I am the Self.' It was a very natural mood with him. He would often quote the second chapter of the *Gita* where it says that the body is subject to six changes. 'I am well. I am always well,' he would say. 'Body is old and body is not going to live many days, but even after my death, I shall go on. I am not despairing. I am here. Sri Ramakrishna wants me here.' Any topic you mentioned to him, his mind soared up to a spiritual sub-

ject.

I remember one day it was Sri Ramakrishna's birthday, about three years before his death. His day began at 3 a.m. even at that age. He would get up, sit down, meditate, and chant and sing. On this day he was in an especially inspired mood. Then from 7 o'clock or so, people began to come from the city in great numbers. Naturally, they wanted to see him. The monks, however, wanted to have some restrictions to protect him in his weakened condition, knowing that without precautions being taken, he would go on all through the day. Towards afternoon, one of the monks said, 'Swami, you should rest a little.' Swami Shivananda became very excited. 'What do you say? Rest a little? People are coming, and they want to see me, a child of Sri Ramakrishna!' 'But, Maharaj, I am speaking so out of concern for your body.' He grew more excited. 'Don't you remember how he [Sri Ramakrishna] shed his blood day and night? He did not care for his body, even when he was suffering from cancer. I being his child, can I just speak of this body and seek bodily comfort and all?'

That was his attitude. When you are standing before that person and he is saying these things, and you are looking at his face, you feel that you are studying a living Upanishad, and you also have a glimpse of what spiritual life means.

He had very little sleep. The night would be spent in ecstasy, as he chanted or someone read from a book to him. His day began at 3 a.m. with meditation, a light breakfast with milk and shredded wheat. At 4 o'clock he would say, 'Oh, now they will come to open the shrine,' and he would wait for the songs to be sung in the shrine. He had introduced the custom that two of the *Sadhus*, who could sing, would sing at the opening of the shrine. He would listen from his own room. Of course, some other Swamis were disturbed, because they wanted a quiet meditation. 'What is this?' they complained.

'A song this early in the morning?' But they could say nothing because Maharaj himself had introduced it.

At 6 o'clock each morning, he was ready to receive the inmates of the monastery, and for one hour the *Sadhus* used to come. He was seated on his bed. By that time he had grown very old, but that same boy was in his face. With great affection he used to greet anyone coming. It was really a monastic atmosphere. Among the *Brahmacharis* and *Sadhus*, he was then just a monk.

I remember he was very fond of a verse of the *Hundred Verses of Renunciation*: 'Everything is accompanied with fear. If you have wealth, there is fear; if you have honour, there is fear — fear of its opposite. Only in one thing there is no fear, and that is in *vairagyam*.' He was very fond of quoting that verse, as with one hand he would strike the other. '*Vairagyam* [renunciation] alone is fearless.'

One hymn of which he was very fond was the *Hymn of the Glories of Shiva*. Particularly on Mondays, he would ask some of the *Sadhus* to chant it.

He would say, 'We are children of Sri Ramakrishna.' Then, jokingly, he would continue, 'Though we do not have all those *Samadhis* that he used to have, we must have something.'

Everything he said vibrated with spiritual fervour, and his state of mind remained high in spite of his declining physical health. And he never forgot those under his care. One of his passions was to offer care for the poor. In his room he kept stocks of blankets and clothing to distribute to them. Every day he sent a monk out, instructing him to inquire in the village concerning any kind of suffering. If there was mental turmoil, he was ready with sympathy and love.

Once it happened that he had entrusted one of the monks to go to every corner of the monastery and to report back on the condition of the people, the goats, the cows, and the garden. The monk reported back with

great enthusiasm, but as he talked, he found that Swami Shivananda had a vacant look as though he was not listening. He stopped reporting. Swami Shivananda turned and looked at him. 'Yes, you see, my boy, truly speaking, this world — all these happenings — has no existence for me. When my mind goes to that level of Self-knowledge, then the whole world vanishes for me. So please excuse me. Don't mind because sometimes my mind soars, and this world has no existence for me.'

During his twelve years, twelve Swamis were sent out all over the world. I remember the occasion when Swami Ashokananda was preparing to come to this country. It was in 1931, and he had come from Calcutta to Belur Math to take his leave from Swami Shivananda. He was to take his noon meal at the monastery, and in honour of the occasion, Swami Shivananda sent two *Sadhus* to a distant place to get a particular kind of fish which is a delicacy in India, a [*magur*] fish, something like catfish. 'Get some big fish. He is going away to America. When he returns, God knows.' In the afternoon, we were all assembled in Swami Shivananda's room. His heart was full of emotion because Swami Ashokananda was leaving. He said, 'My boy, go. Jump over the ocean just as in the days of Rama. Like Hanuman, leap from India to the United States. The idea is that you are going to do the work of God. Just as it was Rama's power that enabled Hanuman to make that tremendous jump. so remember that it is Sri Ramakrishna's power behind you, and everything will be alright.' As he said this, his eyes were glowing, and he blessed Swami Ashokananda. 'The only thing that concerns me,' he went on, 'is your health. But you see, my boy, I am also suffering. This body is so weak, and you see how much work Sri Ramakrishna is having done through this body, though it is weak and suffering. So the same thing will happen to you. Sri Ramakrishna will work out whatever he has to do through you in spite of

your bad health.' Again, he said, 'You know, I am sure you will do splendid work there. I know what work you will do there. I know. And when Romain Rolland learns that you have gone to the West, he will be so happy. He could not have written those two great books if you had not helped.'

About four months later, another inspiring occasion arose when Swami Nikhilananda was preparing to leave. Swami Shivananda said to him, 'Don't be afraid. Wherever you go, we will be accompanying you in spirit. Sri Ramakrishna, Swamiji, and all will accompany you. Don't be nervous.' He drew Swami Nikhilananda close and patted him on the back. 'Good. Don't be afraid. Sri Ramakrishna will be with you.'

He gave inspiration whenever it was necessary. It used to come from the depths of his heart. He was ever concerned about the Swamis who had gone out to the foreign countries, even to South America. He was ever eager for news of them. One day a week was set aside for the foreign mail. Longingly he would ask, 'Is there any foreign mail? Can't you create letters from them? I want to hear from them. They are so far away.' His great anxiety would melt into love when those letters did come. He would listen to the letters, and dictate replies, and the secretary would write the letters for him to sign.

It was remarkable to see his great attitude of reverence to his brother disciples. He would sometimes walk near Swamiji's room on the verandah, uttering in ecstasy, 'Oh, Swamiji.' At that time, I was the caretaker of Swamiji's room, which was always kept as it had been. Each day the room had to be swept and flowers placed in front of his picture. Suddenly, one morning, he entered. Someone had to hold him, because his legs were weak. Thus assisted, he entered the room, and went around from one picture to another. He stopped in front of the picture of Swamiji with his parted hair and Western dress. 'Oh, our Swamiji was a king.' He began to clap his hands. 'Victory to Swamiji.'

There was a group picture which included Swamiji, Swami Turiyananda, Swami Brahmananda, Swami Shivananda, Swami Abhedananda, and another devotee. He stared at that picture. 'Who is this thief?' He pointed to his own likeness. 'He was a thief. He was a scoundrel. But in the company of Swamiji, he became a saint.' So full of humility was he. A great soul, and thousands of spiritual aspirants would come to see him, but he would not permit anyone to talk about him. 'No,' he would insist. 'Talk about Sri Ramakrishna. Talk about Swamiji.'

On Swamiji's birthday he would be in an inspired mood. All would naturally expect to meet him and salute him, and he would not allow anyone to be refused. The whole twelve hours, he would remain in a mood of ecstasy, and he would bless everyone. It was the same on the Holy Mother's birthday, and on Swami Brahmananda's birthday. Always he was full of love and reverence towards all his brother disciples.

Earlier in his life, he had been very austere, and would rarely show emotion, but in this period, he was full of love, and could not hide his emotions. He could not even utter the name of Sri Ramakrishna. On one occasion, some devotees who were good singers had offered some beautiful songs. Later, they came to his room. 'Oh, you have given nice entertainment,' said Maharaj. 'Please bless us that we may have the grace of Sri Ramakrishna,' was their reply. As soon as the name of Sri Ramakrishna was mentioned, he covered his face with his hands and dismissed them. Later, he said, 'I have become old. I could not check my emotions. As soon as I hear the name of Sri Ramakrishna, the Dakshineswar days come back, and I become overwhelmed.' His whole mind and heart were always charged with that emotion. A simple word of remembrance of Sri Ramakrishna or God, and he would at once light up.

Due to the condition of his health, he could not go to the shrine, his sickness was

so advanced. There was, of course, a way from his room through the terrace to the shrine without descending the stairs, but that was forbidden to him. In his room there was a large picture of Sri Ramakrishna. He stared at that picture with calm and loving eyes, as though the picture was living. He said, 'You see, this picture of Sri Ramakrishna is not the real Sri Ramakrishna. The real Sri Ramakrishna has to be realized in the heart.' And as he looked on the picture, he would say, 'You see those two dogs (pointing towards his two dogs, of whom he was very fond, and whom he kept by his side) are my dogs, but this (pointing to himself) is Sri Ramakrishna's dog.' As he uttered the name of Sri Ramakrishna, he would be overwhelmed with emotion.

He used to tell the monks, 'Don't think that the shrine is just a show. In the shrine you will find a picture of Sri Ramakrishna. Don't think it is just a picture. It is the living presence. Sit down there. I tell you, know from me, that the living presence is in the shrine. Just as you need God, God also needs you. This is a two-way traffic. The devotee wants the Lord to come to him, and God also wants the devotee to come to him. You see, Brahman is Absolute, and for Him no hymn or song is necessary. But Brahman also becomes, for the sake of the devotees, *Saguna Brahman* and *Ishwara* and in that stage he loves devotees. So when the shrine is installed, you know there is *Saguna Brahman* and for *Saguna Brahman* all things are necessary. Try to think God is your very own and try to talk to Him. Don't think this atmosphere must be all seriousness. This is where you should relax and think, "I have come to my Beloved." If you sit down, if you sing a song, if you do *japam*, if you meditate, God will say, "This devotee really loves Me."'

One day a devotee came to salute him as he sat on the terrace. It was his first visit. 'Swami, may I take the dust of your feet?'

'Feet? I have no feet. Why do you touch me?' At once he quoted a verse from the *Upanishad*, 'The Self has no feet; at the same time It walks everywhere. Self as consciousness is present everywhere; It gives movement to everything. But in itself It has no organs.' Then, Swami Shivananda said, 'Have you heard this verse?' 'No.' 'Have you read the Upanishads?' 'No.' Then, turning to a Swami near by, he said, 'You please explain to him these ideas.' This was done, and the devotee was very happy that Swami Shivananda, although he was ailing, took the time to give him this instruction.

At one time during this period, an experience came to Swami Shivananda. The residents and devotees began to notice that as soon as anyone came to his room and before anyone had the opportunity to salute him or talk to him, Swami Shivananda would salute with folded hands, saying, 'Salutations to the Lord, salutations to the Self. Salutations to you.' Everyone was embarrassed. 'What is this?' For about a fortnight, this stage continued. Swami Shivananda said, 'Formerly when anyone came to us, we at once would think of the Divine in him or her, saying, "The Lord is present in this devotee." This we used to do in the mind. Nobody would know what we were thinking. But now a stage has come where I even want to do this externally.' This stage did not last long. He would say, 'I am now seeing divinity everywhere. Foolish persons, wicked persons — I see it is God manifested in them all.' The knower of the Self sees the same truth in the scholar, in the elephant, in a dog, in the most condemned person in society. When you see a person manifesting this truth in his life, pouring an overflowing love and compassion and equal-sightedness on everyone, then you learn something you could never learn from the study of the scriptures. □

Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad

SWAMI SRIDHARANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

सत्यमेव जयते नानृतं
सत्येन पन्था विततो देवयानः।
येनाऽऽक्रमन्त्यृषयो ह्याप्तकामा
यत्र तत्सत्यस्य परमं निधानम्॥
Satyam-eva jayate nānṛtaṁ,
satyena panthā vitato deva-yānaḥ;
Yenā''kramanty-ṛṣayo hy-āpta-kāmā
yatra tat-satyasya paramaṁ nidhānam.
(III.i.6)

Truth alone wins, not untruth. By truth is maintained forever the path leading to the gods (called the Devayāna by which the desireless seers ascend to where exists the Supreme Treasure attainable through truth.

This *mantra* is a continuation of the topic introduced in the previous *mantra*. The four ancillary disciplines or corollaries or steps, namely, *satya*, *tapasyā*, *samyag-jñāna* and *brahmacarya*, discussed earlier lead to *Ātmajñāna*. The term *satya* is again taken up in this *mantra* because the definition of *satya* is very difficult and without clearly understanding it, one cannot be expected to practise it in his daily life. Therefore, the teacher develops the idea of *satya* further. The terms *sat*, *satya*, and *sattā* are very frequently used in the Upaniṣads. In the present *mantra* it is said that truth always prevails and not falsehood. Untruth cannot stand the test of time. Truth alone is everlasting. What is meant by truth? Truth, like good and bad, is an abstract idea which is understood through the intellect rationally. However, its practical connotation is grasped by its usage in our daily lives. As Sri Ramakrishna said, to know what milk is with the help of the five senses and mind does not help; it helps only when we drink it, assimilate it, and it nourishes the body to make it strong.

We have to understand some basic ideas on which 'truth' and 'false' are correctly based. Our level of awareness or consciousness or the status of things in the world is divided into four categories: *alīka*, *prātibhāsika*, *vyāvahārika* and *pāramārthika*. The *alīka* is what does not exist; it appears to exist because of the usage of commonly understood words, e.g. *vandhyā-putra*, the son of a barren woman; *śaśa-śṛṅga*, the horn of a rabbit, are contradiction in terms — at first giving us an idea they exist, but soon we find they are figments of imagination. The *prātibhāsika sattā*, e.g. dream experiences which we feel are very real during the dream state but are realized to be unreal on waking. Though not contradicted at the time of dreaming, these dream experiences are contradicted on waking and so are called unreal; they are merely reflections during dream of thoughts held in the mind during the waking state. Similarly, day-dreams, imaginations, hallucinations, illusions, etc. occur during the waking state; these continue to hold sway over us so long as they are not interrupted by other experiences and known to be unreal. The duration of *prātibhāsika sattā* is short compared to the waking experience. Then comes the *vyāvahārika sattā*, which Vedānta terms *mithyā*. This is Vedānta's analysis of our state of what we *now* call the truth. The Buddhists hold that time and changes in time are a flow, a flux, and not permanent. We live and struggle in this flow holding on to the attitude of seeking and acquiring things, in spite of our knowing the world to be transitory. In a flowing river, the continuous flow of water particles is the reality; it is seen as the sameness of the river water. But

this sameness or constancy is not permanent, only the flow of time and change with time is real, say the Buddhists. However, we do not conduct our lives in the light of this truth. All of us pursue happiness and so long as our conception of happiness coincides with that of another, we are the best of friends; the minute our conceptions differ, we become the worst of enemies — though no one knows where real and permanent happiness lies. So, this *vyāvahārika sattā*, the normal experiences of life, is accepted as truth. We believe the world to be permanent though it is not so. This *vyāvahārika sattā* extends throughout our life. Lastly comes the *pāramārthika sattā*, which is indicated in this *mantra* as truth. It means 'I am Eternal', 'I am the Atman', that the 'I', the *aham*, the first person singular number in grammar is nothing but the Divine. On experiencing this Atman, all things are seen in cosmic proportion. Self is none of the five sheaths — *anna*, *prāṇa*, *mana*, *buddhi*, *ānanda*, — it is the Atman alone. To know and become It, is the goal of life, and this makes us *Jīvanmukta*.

Sri Ramakrishna has a telling analogy: The dried-up kernel of a coconut makes a sound on shaking the coconut; it means something is inside the shell, totally detached from it. Prior to becoming dry, the kernel was attached to the shell similar to our strong attachment to our psycho-physical frame. *Pāramārthika sattā* is to first understand the separateness of the kernel (Atman) from the shell (the sheaths) and then to live our lives in the light of this truth without being any more influenced by the false *vyāvahārika sattā*. Man's consciousness oscillates between *alīka*, *prātibhāsika* and *vyāvahārika*; once it rises to *pāramārthika*, there is no coming down again to the unreal (lower) truths of the other three states, these having been contradicted (*bādhita*) once and for all. The *pāramārthika sattā* is never contradicted; it is the Supreme, Sublime, Everlasting Experience — the identification of the individ-

ual 'I' with the universal 'I', and answers the question 'ko'ham? who am I?' with the reply 'I am Atman, I am Brahman'. This *turiya* (transcendental) realization is the ultimate, uncontradicted, experiential truth.

To understand the *mahāvākya* '*Ayam ātmā brahma*', one needs to undergo some disciplines. But it is not a lifeless, gruelling discipline. We are all seeking peace and happiness (*ānanda*), but we do not know where it actually lies, where it is never interrupted. We think it is in some external thing, but in reality it is the reflection of the *Ānanda-svarūpa* of Atman which shines forth for a very short time when some strong desire for a thing has been satisfied and a new unsatisfied desire, obscuring this bliss, has not replaced the old satisfied desire. The earlier interpretation of *satya* was absolutely abstract and academic. Here in this *mantra* 'truth' refers to 'Truth', the *pāramārthika sattā* in its practical connotation of our conduct in the light of this understanding of our true original nature, i.e., *satya-ācarana*. So, the real meaning of *satyameva jayate* is to raise our level of consciousness from *alīka*, *prātibhāsika*, *vyāvahārika* to *turiya-avasthā* — of Oneness with the world, after we have found our forgotten real identity first within and then all around us in the whole world.

The second line of this *mantra* refers to eschatology — the movement of the departed soul. We believe in *punar-janma* (rebirth or the cycle of birth and death). After the fall of the body, the subtle body of the non-realized person can take two paths: either the *devayāna* or the *pitryāna*. By accepting Truth, one goes along *devayāna*, the path of gods. 'Dyu', the root word, means that which is effulgent and enlightened, which removes ignorance from our understanding. *Devayāna* is that path of light and enlightenment. In the theory of rebirth, we are given the eternal hope that if even at the fag end of life we come in touch with *mokṣa-*

śāstra, scriptures dealing with liberation from sorrow and attainment of bliss, we have further chances to find our real nature. Reason also requires that as I have done many 'noble' (good) and 'ignoble' (bad) deeds, and the law of cause and effect (*kārya-kāraṇa-sambandha*) is infallible, so I alone will have to enjoy reward and joy, or suffer punishment and misery. The *karmaphala* (fruit of actions) does not drop off with the fall of the body. Intelligence-emotions, the bank-balance of good-bad deeds, even the 'I', *aham*, do not decompose with the decomposition of the gross body. Even in our lifetime, we need to experience: 'I am not the body'. So, thinkers have enunciated a faultless logic about the *sukṣma śarīra*, the subtle body, which continues its existence till the *jīva* has reached the destiny of becoming one with the Divine. The subtle body consisting of the *ahaṁkāra* (ego sense), the five senses of perception, the five senses of action, the five life-breaths and the sum total of good and bad *karmas* goes out of the gross body with a momentum along the *pitṛyāna* and takes birth in a new body. Those who have lived with Truth and led noble, pious and faultless life go by the *Devayāna*; they continue to evolve without coming back in a human form, they become better and better, and ultimately merge in the Infinite. That is, they go by the luminous and effulgent path and slowly emancipate themselves from the bondage of all *karmas*. (Sri Ramakrishna used to lay stress on holiness and eagerness for liberation. He would say that if one wants to commit suicide, even a pin is enough. One needs to acquire only that much knowledge which helps to lead one to the knowledge of the Self and to fulfil the purpose of life, the ending of all sorrow and the attainment of bliss. However, teachers of religion have to arm themselves with knowledge of many philosophies.)

By walking along the *Devayāna*, those who have no desires left to fulfil (*āptakāma*), the *ṛṣis*, the *ṛk-draṣṭa-puruṣas*, experience the Truth of Self. *Vairāgya* (renunciation) is 'not desiring the things of the world'. But why should one become desireless? Bhartrhari has analysed all the comforts of life in his *Vairāgya-śatakam* and he finds all things are fraught with fear: in enjoyment is the fear of disease; in social position, the fear of falling-off; in wealth, the fear of (hostile) kings; in beauty (of youth), the fear of old age; in scriptural erudition, the fear of opponents; in virtue, the fear of traducers; in body, the fear of death. All things of this world pertaining to man are attended with fear; renunciation alone stands for fearlessness.¹ The mental attitude is '*alam pratyayavān*, I have had enough of the world,' I do not want anything more. How can there be fear if one has become desireless? Such a person lives in the world but uses his intelligence to free himself of all temptations and desires of things. Then he is at peace within and fearless. He treads the path of Truth. He makes no compromise with It in his life. By this method the *ṛṣis* reach the *paramam nidhānam*, the Ultimate Goal of *pāramārthika sattā*, where all *vyāvahārika* limitations are transcended and awareness of their true original Self is attained. And that is the very storehouse of Truth Itself.

(to be continued)

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1. *Bhoge roga-bhayam, kule cyuti-bhayam,*
vitte nṛpālād-bhayam,
māne dainya-bhayam, bale ripu-bhayam,
rūpe jarāyā-bhayam;
Śāstre vādi-bhayam, guṇe khala-bhayam,
kāye kṛtāntād-bhayam,
sarvam vastu bhayānvitam bhuvi nṛṇām
vairāgyam-eva-abhayam.

Vairāgya-Śatakam, 31

The Ordeal of Love: Sister Nivedita's Struggles in America for the Education of Women in India

DR. MAMATA RAY AND DR. ANIL BARAN RAY

(Continued from previous issue)

Ann Arbor and Jackson

Failures in Chicago, however, could not deter Nivedita from going on to Ann Arbor and Jackson in Michigan and continue her battle there. She had to win over the odds for the sake of her 'poor babies' in India who could not otherwise be educated. But, all the same, Nivedita carried to Ann Arbor and Jackson some strains of her failure in Chicago. She received a warm welcome at Ann Arbor and Jackson. 'Jackson was dear'⁴⁶, as she herself acknowledged and yet, as she was still smarting from her sufferings at Chicago, she responded to the welcome with some amount of 'grudging' acceptance:

I am ashamed to say that I was shaking hands and receiving everyone's thanks and kindness with a heart full of angry contempt. 'Hum' I was saying, as they rushed up and "enthused", 'I give you great pleasure, did I? Well, but are you going to give us anything?' It was horrid of me I suppose — and it has been more and more my temper lately.⁴⁷

In response to the question as to 'what can we do to help you', Nivedita replied, 'Give me a dollar a year for 10 years.'⁴⁸ Having appreciated that no 'great things could be

done without money', they promised to Nivedita that 'they'll form a group for me'⁴⁹. Nivedita was particularly appreciative of 'one lady' who whispered to her, 'I'm going to try to be as loving as ever I can' and that evening she sent me a note begging me to accept 5 dollars.⁵⁰

The atmosphere being so cordial at Jackson, Nivedita found it quite easy to explain to 'these people' that Swami Vivekananda 'was not only one of the greatest historic teachers of the East, but in my view also of the West'⁵¹. Addressing Swami Vivekananda as 'my beloved father', Nivedita, happy with her experiences of Jackson wrote to him that she was glad that she was able to be of some service to her Guru: 'In Jackson Mich, there lived a man to whom your name was as a red rag to the infuriate bull. Today he is your friend.'⁵² Speaking of her own part in Swami Vivekananda's scheme of things, Nivedita wrote in the same letter that she used to think earlier 'I wanted to work for the women of India' and that coming down from the heights of grand impersonal ideas, she believed, 'I want to do things only because

46. *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, vol. 1, p. 297. Letter dated 13 January 1900. [Hereafter, *Letters*.]

47. *Ibid*.

48. *Ibid*.

49. *Ibid*.

50. *Ibid*.

51. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 298. Letter dated 13 January 1900.

52. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 300.

they are my Father's will.... One longs to serve for serving's sake, for ever and ever, dear Master — not for our miserable little life!⁵³

Detroit

Whatever feeling of elation Nivedita had at Ann Arbor and Jackson was short-lived. In two days after she received her warm welcome at Ann Arbor and Jackson, she was to receive her most torrid pounding in the worst ever gathering of 'awful fanatics' of 'Church women' at The Women's Club at Detroit. As she herself observes, 'Life brings experience. After being indulged and petted like a spoilt child at Ann Arbor I suddenly found myself yesterday afternoon [15 January 1900] in a nest of thorns'⁵⁴. After Nivedita addressed herself on India, one lady 'sniffed' and said that what Nivedita said was rather commonplace and had already been said by the missionaries, while another tried to drag her into attacking missionaries. Nivedita was also grilled by questions on polygamy, child-widows, the inferiority of wives, the preference of sons, and the contempt for women in India. The provocation was insufferable and an angry Nivedita now took it upon herself to defend every Hindu custom including polygamy which she justified as the *only* substitute for divorce and then went on to praise the chastity of Hindu men on the plane of national ideals. 'H'm! Just like our Mormons!' was the sneering remark Nivedita received from the President of the Club on what she said. This provoked her into retorting: 'not like Mormons I think! Rather — not quite so bad as Christians!'⁵⁵ Nivedita laughed at the customary question about Hindu women giving babies to crocodiles. As to the suggestion that she should remonstrate with husbands and wives in India for not eating to-

gether and put 'a higher way' before them, she said that married people should be left to settle such things between themselves. Taking it all in all, Nivedita's conclusion about her meeting in The Women's Club at Detroit was that 'I never was in a gathering so like a lunatic asylum.'⁵⁶

The *worst* was not yet over, for Nivedita. After the lecture at The Women's Club, one lady came up to Nivedita to pronounce Vivekananda's name with a sneer. This made Nivedita blow her top. She could not take it any longer:

By that time I was savage... 'He is my Master', I said very distinctly. 'I owe more to him than to [any] other living person...'

I could not have imagined feeling so thoroughly angry with an audience.... I suppose it is a good thing that I did not break out and attack them, though they richly deserved it for their utter want of good breeding. There was so much *opinion* in their remarks.⁵⁷

So, after all the love and warmth at Ann Arbor, Nivedita reached Detroit only to find herself fuming and chafing against the artificiality of people about her. The solace came at this point in time to Nivedita from her Guru telling her that they — she and her Guru — were but instruments in the hands of the Mother for 'doing' good to others:

We are all sacrifices — each in his own way. The great worship is going on — no one can see its meaning except that it is a great sacrifice.⁵⁸

Swamiji was even more explicit in terms of reassuring her about the fund collection problem which was worrying Nivedita:

Well, money will come for your school, never fear — it has got to come; if it does not come, who cares? One road is quite as good as the other. Mother knows best.... You are

56. Ibid.

57. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 302.

58. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 6, p. 422. Letter dated 24 January 1900. [Hereafter, CWV.]

53. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 299.

54. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 300. Letter dated 16 January 1900.

55. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 301.

learning your lessons — that is all I want. So am I; the moment we are fit, money and men must flow towards us.⁵⁹

Back to Chicago

At the end of January 1900, Nivedita came back to Chicago where a *new 'give and take' basis* of earning money was suggested to her by a public school Principal. The proposal was that Nivedita tell the Indian mythological and historical stories to American school children, make a book out of it and earn ten per cent royalties out of the sale of the book. To quote Nivedita:

It was the idea of a nice strong man — a public school Principal — who has taken me up enthusiastically and wants to *make my service to Educ. in this rich country pay for my right to educate in the poor* [italics added].

He was struck by some stories — history and geography mixed — that I told in a school.

He thinks that I could get bulk of money this way.⁶⁰

The thought that there was money in it for her school set Nivedita to writing the proposed stories for the American school children. She wrote about Dhruva, Krishna and some other mythological and historical characters such as Prith[v]i Raj. Swami Vivekananda himself wrote a few stories such as the one on Gopala⁶¹ asking Nivedita to 'rewrite them if you think so — get them published if you find anybody to do it and take the proceeds, if any, for your work'⁶². Speaking of her enterprise to write these stories, Nivedita observes, 'I never did anything so difficult as these stories. Fancy! — today I have before me the task of putting on paper what I know about Buddha. It's like

trying to put the rainbow under a tumbler.'⁶³ One Mr. Waterman was keen to publish these stories as a text book for American public schools. When Nivedita finally finished writing the stories, Mr. Waterman thought that what Nivedita produced was more suitable for grown-ups rather than the children and as such Mr. Waterman withdrew his offer of publishing the book. Mr. Waterman was good enough to tell Nivedita that what she evolved was 'really better', but did not have, in his opinion, any value for the American public schools. Nivedita did not disagree: 'I have produced a book which may appeal to the...old enough, but cannot be used in the Schools here. Now if it had been done for the public schools I might have made almost unlimited money by it. This way, I cannot.'⁶⁴ All the same, she was disappointed at the result of an enterprise which kept her occupied for several months in America.

Kansas City, Minneapolis, Boston

In February 1900, Nivedita moved from Chicago on to Kansas City, Minneapolis and Boston, in that order. That she did not feel too happy in Kansas City is evident from what she wrote:

Kansas City is *very* slow. I do not see *any* prospect of help here. But you say I must not mind. Yet you would find it difficult. I say to myself, 'Be careful personally — grudge nothing where work may be advanced.' But I am developing money-nervousness. It seems too bad to spend the large sums required for journeys like these — for apparently no pur-

63. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 333. Letter dated 20 April 1900.

64. *Letters*, p. 347. Letter dated 18 May 1900. These stories written mostly during Nivedita's stay in America in 1900 were eventually published as *Cradle Tales of Hinduism* in 1907. See the editor's preface in *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 1967), vol. 3, p. x. [Hereafter CWN.]

59. CWW, vol. 6, p. 424. Letter dated 15 January 1900.

60. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 314. Letter dated 31 January 1900.

61. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 327.

62. CWW, vol. 6, p. 424. Letter dated 15 February 1900.

pose whatever.⁶⁵

In the midst of the gloom that was enveloping Nivedita, there came Swami Vivekananda's letter, as it always did before, assuring her that:

Things have got to come round if we are steady. I am sure you will get all the money you require here.... Things have got to come round — the seed must die underground to come up as the tree.... I never had a struggle in the jaws of death, but it meant a tremendous upheaval of the whole life. One such brought me to Ramakrishna, another sent me to the U.S., this has been the greatest of all.⁶⁶

These words of encouragement and assurance kept a weary Nivedita moving onward. She spoke from a tremendous sense of strength in presenting before her audience at Jamaica in Massachusetts a lecture titled 'Our [the West's] Obligation to the Orient' in which she dwelt at length on the *greatness* of India. She pointed out that the East gave the West the religion of Christianity — a religion which was conceived in love but which later at the hands of its Western practitioners, became *exclusive*, giving rise to militarism and imperialism. Today, the West, Nivedita pointed out, had to turn to India to learn the real ethos of Religion. A new discovery in the field of religion, 'a second renaissance'⁶⁷ so to say, was staged in the nineteenth-century India. The new discovery of India holding out *renunciation* and *self-sacrifice* as the law of life, she claimed, can change the face of the world and this constituted the special contribution of India in the nineteenth century to the world. India had shown the world that the only way to reconcile difference is to *include* them, to include the opposite unities in a larger and *federal* unity, in a higher synthe-

sis. By holding out that all creeds are but different paths to reach the goal—the Supreme—the greatest of the nineteenth century-India's Brahmajnanis, Sri Ramakrishna, showed the world how the world, after all, can reach the end of all sectarianism, dogmatism and bigotry. The salvation of the world, Nivedita said in conclusion, lay not in Christian *exclusiveness* but in moving toward this new and moving realization, in moving, so to say, from the *unreal* to the *real*.

Sending his blessings, Swami Vivekananda wrote to Nivedita:

All blessings on you. Don't despond in the least.... You come of the blood of a Kshatriya. Our yellow garb is the robe of death on the field of battle. Death for the cause is our goal, not success.... Black and thick are the folds of sinister fate. But I am the master.... Steady, child, don't be bought by gold or anything else, and we win!⁶⁸

New York

Wishing to ensure victory and success for Nivedita on the financial front, Swami Vivekananda arranged a meeting between Nivedita and Mrs. C.P. Huntington, 'a very, very wealth lady', to quote Swamiji, 'who has helped me'.⁶⁹ At Swamiji's instance, a meeting between the two was held in New York in June 1900 with what result can be seen from the following letter of Nivedita written to Miss J. MacLeod:

Yesterday Mrs. C.P. Huntington gave me \$ 5000 and Swami [Vivekananda] says there is no longer any secret. He only did not want you all to know till the thing was done, as that short [sort] of thing makes people ridiculous. When Mrs. Leggett comes back to New York, Mrs. H. looks forward to knowing her and after consulting with her and receiving her advice, to making a further yearly donation to the school.... Swami says that the interest on the present sum of \$ 6500 will give me in

65. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 317. Letter dated 3 February 1900.

66. *CWV*, vol. 6, p. 430. Letter dated 28 March 1900.

67. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 353.

68. *CWV*, vol. 8, p. 522. Letter dated 26 May 1900.

69. *CWV*, p. 521. Letter dated 2 May 1900.

Calcutta a monthly income of at least 50 Rs.⁷⁰

So, with Mrs. Huntington's contribution for five thousand dollars, five hundred dollars collected from small subscriptions, and one thousand dollars gifted by Mrs. Francis H. Leggett of New York, Nivedita's total collection in the United States now stood at six thousand five hundred dollars.⁷¹

VI

After eight months of struggle and suffering through the months of November 1899 to June 1900, Nivedita, with her Guru's blessings, was able at long last to achieve some measure of success on the financial front. She had success on some other fronts too in the matter of her school for girls in Calcutta. Her longstanding desire to have a permanent guild in America for help towards the education of women of India fructified in the shape of The Ramakrishna Guild of Help in America which she was able to establish with Mrs. Francis M. Leggett as the President, Mrs. Ole Bull as the Honorary National Secretary and with representatives in Chicago, New York, Boston and Detroit. Miss Christine Greenstidel, who was later to take over much of the burden of Nivedita's school work in India, became the Secretary of the Detroit Committee. Miss J. MacLeod became the Honorary Vice-President of the New York Committee.

The Guild helped Nivedita publish a booklet entitled *The Project of the Ramakrishna School for Girls* with the following appeal to the Americans' sense of charity:

Let me say, in conclusion, that I trust I am seeking to divert not energy from the near duty to the far. In these days of international commerce and finance, we are surely realising that only World-Service is true Home-Service. Already, we seem to be answering Walt Whitman's sublime question in the affirmative — 'Are all nations communing? Is

there going to be but one heart to the globe?'⁷²

To sum up, Nivedita's mission to the West — representing her work for Indian women, raising funds for their education — shows her intense suffering in the process of what she set out to do. Like her Master saying in the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in September 1893, she could have summed up her experience in the United States by saying: 'I came here to seek aid for my impoverished people and I fully realised how difficult it was to get help for heathens from Christians in a Christian land.'⁷³ She suffered through most of the time of her work in the United States. She was weary, often disappointed and at times even heart-broken in facing the ridicule, argument and opposition. All the same, she kept going, being sustained by the words of her Master, having known from him that 'suffering is the lot of the world's best and bravest'⁷⁴ and that our sufferings 'come to do us good in the long run, although at the time we feel that we are submerged for ever'⁷⁵. Her 'awful sufferings at Almora'⁷⁶ made India be reborn in my heart with all this passion of love⁷⁷ and her intense suffering in the United States made her realize that no great

(Continued on page 716)

72. CWN, vol. 4, p. 378.

73. CWV, vol. 1, p. 20.

74. CWV, vol. 6, p. 419. Letter dated 1 November 1899.

75. CWV, vol. 6, p. 429. Letter dated 25 March 1900.

76. This happened during the summer of 1898. The new phase of consciousness to which Swami Vivekananda had initiated Nivedita through pain and sufferings in the summer of 1898 was to be the most significant step not only in her Indianization but also in her resultant evolution as a Mother, Maid, and Friend of India, regenerating every aspect of the nation's life with Eternal Love and Service Free.

77. Letters, vol. 1, p. 305. Letter dated 18 January 1900.

70. Letters, vol. 1, p. 367. Letter dated 26 June 1900.

71. CWN, vol. 4, p. 377, footnote.

Years of Association with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

DR. CYRUS R. MEHTA

Dr. Cyrus R. Mehta, the writer of this report, had the honour of escorting Swami Sarvagatananda to MIT for the Commencement Ceremony 1998, assisting him with the various arrangements, and accompanying him to the 'Bush room' to meet President Clinton. In providing the background, the writer highlights the contribution made by Swami Akhilanandaji (since deceased) and Swami Sarvagatanandaji to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology over many decades. For a more detailed account and replay broadcast, including the Invocation by Swami Sarvagatananda, please visit the Internet at <http://www.mit.edu/commencement/1998>.

The Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of Boston is located on the south bank of the Charles river, in the bustling heart of the City of Boston. From the Vedanta Society's library on the second floor one can gaze across the river at sailboats, row boats, wild ducks and Canadian geese, all gliding serenely by at a leisurely pace. On the opposite shore lies the City of Cambridge, home of the world renowned Massachusetts Institute of Technology, popularly known as MIT, whose stately buildings can be clearly viewed from the library window. For the past 43 years the Boston Vedanta Society has enjoyed very close and friendly ties with MIT. In 1955, MIT's President James Killian built a chapel open to all religious faiths and invited Swami Akhilananda and Swami Sarvagatananda to offer prayer services and scriptural classes in the new chapel. They were also given offices on the MIT campus and appointed as MIT chaplains. Over the years Swami Sarvagatananda kept up that relationship by conducting Bhagavad Gita classes, giving special lectures, counselling students and being available with practical and sage advice in times of crisis on the MIT campus. He is now perhaps the senior-most member of the MIT community, greatly beloved, highly respected and honoured by the MIT administration including the present and past MIT Presidents. In 1996, at a special celebration honouring the Swami's forty years of service to MIT, Dean Robert Randolph

presented the Swami with a special gift and these words:

Swami, I want to say a few words on behalf of MIT. For a long time you have been a store of wisdom and strength for this community. I think that in many ways Jim Killian's wisdom was well before its time. Over the years you've come to be recognized, but I suspect that it has not always been easy, and it has not always been as much fun as it is these last few times. We want you to know how much we appreciate the work that you have done.

Friday, 5 June 1998, was a big day at MIT; it was Commencement Day. Every year on Commencement Day the newly graduating students are awarded their degrees in a special ceremony which is conducted with great pomp. To the accompaniment of orchestral music the MIT faculty and graduating students, clad in their academic regalia, march down Massachusetts Avenue to the open-air Killian Court. There the President of MIT, senior faculty members and honoured guests mount a specially constructed stage and award the students their degrees in the presence of their parents, relatives and friends. The ceremony begins with an opening invocation which is followed by an address by the commencement speaker, an address by MIT's President, and the awarding of the degrees. This year's commencement would be even more special than

usual because the opening invocation was to be delivered by Swami Sarvagatananda, and one of the commencement speakers was to be William Jefferson Clinton, the President of the United States. This would be the first time in its entire history that a sitting President of the United States was to visit MIT.

It was a beautiful morning, cool and sunny. Killian Court was absolutely packed with over 10,000 spectators, mostly proud parents and relatives, cheering and smiling as their sons and daughters marched down to their seats from where they would be called up to accept their hard-earned degrees. Because of the presence of the President of the United States, the security was tight. There were Secret Service agents everywhere, some in uniform and some in plainclothes. On the stage were the President of the United States, Swami Sarvagatananda, President Charles Vest of MIT, Mr. Alex D'Arbeloff, Chairman of the MIT Corporation, Dr. David Ho, the second commencement speaker, other senior members of the MIT community, and the Mayor of Cambridge. Promptly at 11 a.m., Mr. D'Arbeloff came up to the podium and said,

The Corporation and the Faculty of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology are now declared convened together with this assembly on the occasion of the commencement exercises of this institution for the conferring of its degrees. The stage assembly and the audience will please rise and join Mrs. Margaret O'Keefe for the singing of one verse of the Star Spangled Banner, and please remain standing for the Invocation by

Swami Sarvagatananda.

There followed a beautiful rendering of the national anthem. Then Swami Sarvagatananda mounted the podium and uttered these words:

O Lord, lead us from the unreal to the Real,
from darkness to Light, and
from death to Immortality.

Peace, Peace, Peace be unto all.

May the Lord bless this noble institution which is committed to excellence in science and technology, and in tune with moral and spiritual values.

May Christ of the Christians, Holy One of the Jews, Allah of the Muslims, Buddha of the Buddhists, Tao of the Chinese, Ahura Mazda of the Zoroastrians, and Brahman of the Hindus bless this occasion and all those that assemble here.

Let us remember this prayer of the *Rg Veda*:

Let us be united; let us speak in harmony,

Common be our prayers;

Common be the end of our assembly;

Let us pray with common aspirations;

United be our feelings;

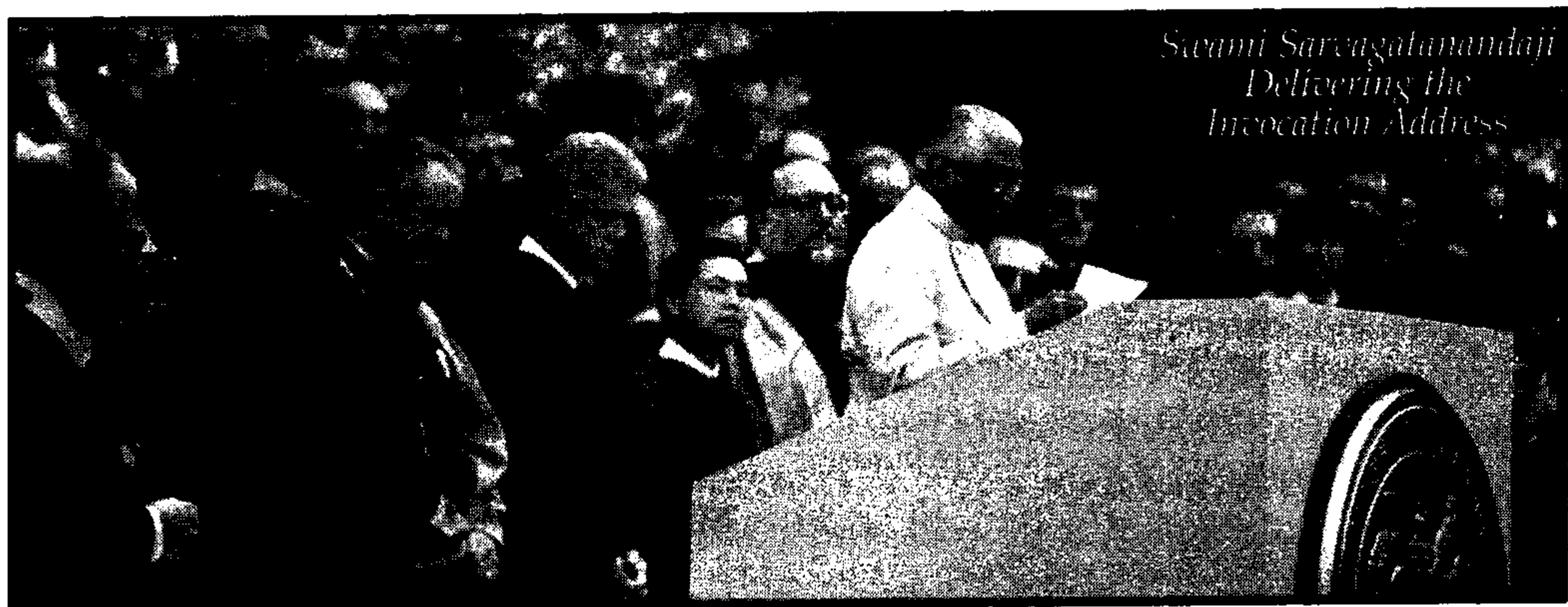
United be our hearts;

United be our thoughts;

Perfect be our unity.

Peace, Peace, Peace be unto all.

The Swami's voice carried conviction and infused a spiritual mood into the proceedings. One could clearly see that the President of the United States was deeply moved by the way he nodded his head appreciatively, especially towards the



*Swami Sarvagatanandaji
Delivering the
Invocation Address*

end of the invocation when the Swami made a plea for unity and harmony.

There followed the addresses by the two commencement speakers. The first to speak was Dr. David Ho, a brilliant young scientist and former MIT student, who is credited with making important discoveries in AIDS research. What clearly came through in Dr. Ho's speech was his humility, his gratitude for the work of others who had come before him and helped him on his path, and his great love for his subject. Then President Clinton took to the podium and spoke of his commitment to science and technology, his intention to increase the funding available for these activities and his administration's efforts to bring the Internet into every classroom of the United States by the turn of the century. Finally, MIT's President Dr. Charles Vest spoke to the graduating students and asked them to turn around and thank their parents who were sitting proudly in the audience behind them. This ended the first part of the commencement exercises. The second part, consisting of the awarding of the degrees, then proceeded as scheduled.

The Swami and President Clinton left the stage as the degrees were being awarded and made their way to the Bush Room, a dressing room reserved for the dignitaries to change to their regular clothes. The President was so heavily guarded that he did not initially know that the Swami was present. However, as he was leaving the premises, he spotted the Swami and graciously stopped, turned back, and came up to greet him. They shook hands warmly and President Clinton expressed his gratitude for the Invocation by the Swami saying how much he liked it. For his part the Swami mentioned that he had sent the President a copy of *The Gift Unopened*, a book about Swami Vivekananda written by Nina and Archibald Stark, two senior members of the Boston Vedanta Society. The book's theme is that Swamiji's message to the western world is a gift as yet unopened by its people. President Clinton remembered the book and said he had read it. After posing for a joint photograph, the Swami and the President parted company and returned to their respective worlds. □

The Ordeal of Love: Sister Nivedita's Struggles...

(Continued from page 713)

truth can find acceptance without ridicule, argument and opposition⁷⁸, and having overcome them all in the end, she felt that 'in future I can take my responsibilities on my shoulders, as much as Swami does his. I have got my diploma'⁷⁹

Nivedita now knew the *uses* of suffering: 'How curious is this mystery of pain! I see now as clear as daylight.'⁸⁰ In seeing and realizing *thus*, Nivedita stood like Andre in the great Tolstoy classic, *War and Peace*. She

suffered, she showed her wounds and still she stood to proclaim, with fullest reverence to her Guru — 'I don't *want* Salvation in any form — I prefer to help, to be a sacrifice.'⁸¹ That was the spirit which animated and sustained Nivedita in her struggles in the United States for the cause of Indian women's education, eventually making her triumphant in her mission. Indeed, this particular chapter of Nivedita's life-story shows in clear terms that no account of the history of women's education could be complete without a reference to the work this great lady did for the Indian sisters. □

78. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 350. Letter dated 30 May 1900.

79. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 304. Letter dated 18 January 1900.

80. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 305.

81. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 380. Letter dated 13 August 1900.

साधनगीता Gita for Spiritual Practice

साधनप्रकाशिकासहिता

With an Exegesis on Spiritual Practice

(Continued from previous issue)

DR. B.R. PHANI KUMAR

अथ ज्ञानयोगः-२ Yoga of Knowledge-2

ज्ञानिनो लक्षणानि पुनः प्रदर्शयति—

The Lord again narrates the qualities of a Knower of the Self—

५७. कर्मण्यकर्म यः पश्येदकर्मणि च कर्म यः।

स बुद्धिमान्मनुष्येषु स युक्तः कृत्स्नकर्मकृत्॥ (४.१८)

57. He who perceives worklessness in work and work in worklessness is wise among men, controlled and has done all the works.

कर्मणि कायेन्द्रियमनोबुद्ध्यादिभिः क्रियमाणे अकर्म निष्क्रियमात्मतत्त्वं गुणैरेव सर्वं क्रियते कर्म न तु मया नित्यासङ्गरूपेणेति निश्चितबुद्ध्या य आत्मदर्शी पश्येत् अकर्मणि च कर्माभावे सर्वव्यापाराभावे च अहं तूष्णीं तिष्ठामीति मनोव्यापाररूपं कर्म यः पश्येत् साक्षिबुद्ध्या स बुद्धिमान् ज्ञानी मनुष्येषु सर्वेषु स युक्तः योगी कृत्स्नकर्मकृत्। सकलकर्मणां आत्मज्ञानाग्निना दग्धत्वात् न तस्य पुनः कर्तव्यमस्तीति भावः।

The seer of the Self who sees worklessness, that is, the Nature of the Self which is devoid of all works, in work done by the senses, mind, body, intellect, etc., with the determined intellect, 'All work is done only by attributes but not by me who am eternally detached', and, who, like a witness sees in worklessness, that is, in the absence of all works, all engagements, work of the nature of mental activity in the thought, 'I am sitting quietly', is wise, a Knower among all men, poised, a yogi and is one who has done all the works. The meaning is, no duty remains to be discharged by him because all his works are destroyed by the fire of Self-knowledge. (4.18)

५८. निराशीर्यतचित्तात्मा त्यक्तसर्वपरिग्रहः।

शारीरं केवलं कर्म कुर्वन्नाप्नोति किल्बिषम्॥ (४.२१)

58. Devoid of desire, controlled in mind and body, renouncing all acceptances and doing merely bodily activity, he is not tainted.

निराशीः अपगताशीः काङ्क्षारहितः यतचित्तात्मा निगृहीतान्तःकरणः त्यक्तसर्वपरिग्रहः सर्वविषयकपरिग्रहः काङ्क्षाभावात् त्यक्तः येन सः त्यक्तसर्वपरिग्रहः। एवंभूतः शारीरं देहयात्राप्रयोजनं केवलं कर्म कुर्वन् नाप्नोति न गच्छति किल्बिषं पापं ज्ञानविदग्धकर्मत्वात्।

Devoid of desire, bereft of wish, controlled in mind and body, that is, with the inner sense subdued, and renouncing all types of acceptance because of absence of desire, such a one does not attain sin, doing merely bodily activity, that is, the activity needed for the sustenance of the body because all his actions are burnt by Knowledge. (4.21)

५९. ज्ञेयः स नित्यसंन्यासी यो न द्वेष्टि न काङ्क्षति।

निर्वन्दो हि महाबाहो सुखं बन्धात् प्रमुच्यते॥ (५.३)

59. *O Arjuna! he who neither hates nor desires is to be known as a perpetual renouncer. Being devoid of dualities, he is easily liberated from bondage.*

यः परमात्मनिष्ठः गुणातीतत्वान्न द्वेष्टि न काङ्क्षति स नित्यसंन्यासी नित्यं सदा संन्यासी त्यागी इति ज्ञेयः ज्ञातव्यः। हि यस्मात् स निर्द्वन्द्वः द्वन्द्वैरनभिभूयमानः तस्मात् महाबाहो अर्जुन सुखं आशु बन्धात् रागद्वेषादिद्वन्द्वकृतात् प्रमुच्यते मुक्तो भवति।

He who is established in the Supreme Self does not hate or desire because he has transcended the attributes and he is to be known as a perpetual renouncer, sacrificer. Because he is devoid of dualities, is not troubled by dualities, O Arjuna! he is easily liberated, freed from bondage created by dualities like attachment, hatred, etc. (5.3)

६०. नैव किञ्चित्करोमीति युक्तो मन्येत तत्त्ववित्।
पश्यञ्छृण्वन्स्पृशञ्जिघ्रन्अश्नन्गच्छन्स्वपञ्श्वसन्॥ (५.८)

६१. प्रलपन्विसृजन्गृह्णन्मिषन्निमिषन्नपि।
इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थेषु वर्तन्त इति धारयन्॥ (५.९)

60, 61. *The yogi, who is a Knower of Truth, should think: 'I am not doing anything at all', though engaged in seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, walking, sleeping, breathing, talking, excreting, accepting and closing and opening his eyes believing that the senses tend towards the sense-objects.*

युक्तः समाहितचित्तः तत्त्ववित् तत्त्वमात्मनः वेत्तीति ज्ञानी पश्यन् शृण्वन् स्पृशन् जिघ्रन् अश्नन् गच्छन् स्वपन् श्वसन् प्रलपन् विसृजन् गृह्णन्मिषन्निमिषन्नपि एतानि कर्माणि सदा कुर्वाणोऽपि इन्द्रियाणि इन्द्रियार्थेषु स्वकीयेषु विषयेषु वर्तन्ते प्रवर्तन्त इति धारयन् चिन्तयन् नैवाहं निर्गुणः आत्मस्वरूपः किञ्चिदपि कर्म करोमीति मन्येत भावयेत्। एवं निरन्तरं आत्मतत्त्वं चिन्तयतः योगिनः क्रमेण बुद्धिः आत्मन्येव परिनिष्ठिता भवति तदसङ्गतत्वं च प्राप्नोति।

The yogi controlled in mind and being a Knower of Truth which is the Nature of the Self should think — 'I, being the attributeless Self, am not at all doing even the least action' — though engaged in performing actions like seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, walking, sleeping, breathing, talking, excreting, accepting and closing and opening the eyes, believing that the senses tend towards their respective objects. The intellect of a yogi, who thus constantly meditates upon the Nature of the Self, gradually gets established only in the Self and attains Its detached nature. (5.8, 9)

६२. न प्रहृष्येत् प्रियं प्राप्य नोद्विजेत्प्राप्य चाप्रियम्।
स्थिरबुद्धिरसंमूढो ब्रह्मविद्ब्रह्मणि स्थितः॥ (५.२०)

62. *The Knower of Brahman, being of steady intellect, undeluded and established in Brahman should not be elated on attaining the desired thing and should not be excited on getting the unpleasant.*

न प्रहृष्येत् न प्रहर्षं कुर्यात् प्रियं इष्टं आत्मनः प्राप्य एवं नोद्विजेत् न उद्वेगं प्राप्नुयात् प्राप्य च अप्रियं अनिष्टम्। तस्य ज्ञानिनः अविक्रयत्वे हेतुमाह—

स्थिरबुद्धिः आत्मनि निर्विशेषे स्थापिता बुद्धिरित्यर्थः अतः असंमूढः रागद्वेषादिभिः सम्मोहं न गच्छतीति ब्रह्मवित् ब्रह्म वेत्तीति ब्रह्मण्येव निराकारे निर्गुणे स्थितः।

He should not be elated, feel joyous on getting the thing pleasant to the self; similarly, he should not be excited, be subject to agitation on getting an unpleasant thing. Now the Lord states the reason for the immutability of such a Knower—

He is of steady intellect, that is, his intellect is established in the Self which is uniform. Therefore, he is undeluded, he does not get deluded by attachment, hatred, etc. He is a

Knower of Brahman and is established in the formless, attributeless Brahman. (5.20)

इदानीं क्षेत्रात् नश्वरात् क्षेत्रज्ञमात्मानं विशिनष्टि विचारसौलभ्याय—

Now, for the facility of discrimination, the Lord distinguishes the Self, which is the field-knower, from the field which is perishable—

६३. इदं शरीरं कौन्तेय क्षेत्रमित्यभिधीयते।

एतद्यो वेत्ति तं प्राहुः क्षेत्रज्ञ इति तद्विदः॥ (१३.१)

63. This body, O Arjuna! is called the field. The Knowers of both the Self and the field call the soul, which knows the field, a Knower of the field.

हे कौन्तेय इदं शरीरं दृश्यमानं प्रतिक्षणं अहमिदं ममेदमित्यध्यासतो ज्ञायमानं दुर्वारसुखदुःखाद्यनेकभोगायतनं दुरुच्छेद्यसुदृढसंसारवृक्षमूलं क्षेत्रमित्यभिधीयते उच्यते ज्ञानिभिः। एतत् क्षेत्रं यः आत्मा केवलज्ञानस्वरूपः हृदयस्थस्सन् वेत्ति जानाति इदं मे शरीरमिति नित्यं तमात्मानं क्षेत्रज्ञः क्षेत्रं जानातीति क्षेत्रज्ञ इति तद्विदः क्षेत्रक्षेत्रज्ञविदः प्राहुः वदन्ति।

This body, O Arjuna! which is visible and experienced every moment due to the superimposition, 'I am this and this is mine', the abode of innumerable inevitable experiences like pleasure and pain, and the root of the very strong, indestructible tree of samsara, is named by the Knowers as the field. The Knowers of (both) the field and the field-knower call the Self, which is of the nature of pure Knowledge and which, seated in the heart, perpetually knows this field as, 'This is my body', the Knower of the field. (13.1)

६४. क्षेत्रज्ञं चापि मां विद्धि सर्वक्षेत्रेषु भारत।

क्षेत्रक्षेत्रज्ञयोर्ज्ञानं यत्तज्ज्ञानं मतं मम॥ (१३.२)

64. O Arjuna! know Me to be the Knower of the field in all the fields. According to Me, the knowledge of the field and the field-knower alone is Knowledge.

क्षेत्रज्ञं पूर्वोक्तं निर्विशेषज्ञानस्वरूपं चापि मां वासुदेवं विद्धि सर्वक्षेत्रेषु स्थितं हे भारत। क्षेत्रक्षेत्रज्ञयोः ज्ञानं यत् तदेव ज्ञानं मतं मम। यतः लोके क्षेत्रक्षेत्रज्ञयोरन्यत् न विद्यते किञ्चित् अतः तयोरेव ज्ञानं ज्ञानमुच्यते इति भगवतोऽभिप्रायः।

O Arjuna! know Me, the Lord Vasudeva, to be the aforesaid Knower of the field, of the nature of uniform Knowledge, established in all the fields. According to Me, the knowledge of the field and the field-knower alone is Knowledge. The Lord's opinion is that, as there exists in this world nothing other than the field and the field-knower, the knowledge of these two alone is called Knowledge. (13.2)

पूर्वोक्तक्षेत्रज्ञात्मज्ञानप्राप्त्युपकारकाणि तत्त्वजिज्ञासुभिरुपासितव्यानि यानि ज्ञानिनां लक्षणानि तान्युपदिशति—

The Lord teaches the qualities of Knowers of the Self which are to be practised by the aspirants after Knowledge, and which are helpful in attaining the Knowledge of the Self, the aforesaid field-knower—

६५. अमानित्वमदम्भित्वमहिंसा क्षान्तिरार्जवम्।

आचार्योपासनं शौचं स्थैर्यमात्मविनिग्रहः॥ (१३.७)

65. Humility, unostentatiousness, non-violence, forbearance, straightforwardness, service to the guru, purity, steadfastness, self-control...

अमानित्वं मानिनो भावः मानित्वं आत्मश्रेष्ठ्यप्रकटीकरणं तद्राहित्यममानित्वम्। एवं अदम्भित्वं दम्भाभावः स्वकीयधर्माचरणाप्रकटीकरणम्। अहिंसा सर्वप्राणिनामपीडनम्। क्षान्तिः क्षमा शत्रूनपि क्षन्तुं शीलम्। आर्जवं ऋजुभावः व्यवहारादिषु। आचार्योपासनं अज्ञानभञ्जकस्य गुरोः श्रद्धाभक्तिपूर्वकं सेवनम्। शौचं बाह्यमान्तरं च स्थैर्यं आत्मज्ञानसाधनविषये दृढनिश्चयः। आत्मविनिग्रहः देहेन्द्रियमनोबुद्ध्यहंकाराणां विनिग्रहः साधनमार्गं आनयनम्।

Humility is absence of pride which is showing off of one's superiority. Similarly, unostentatiousness is absence of giving expression to the performance of one's duties. Non-violence is not hurting any being and forbearance is forgiving even enemies. Sincerity in conduct etc. is straightforwardness. Service to the guru who is the destroyer of ignorance consists in attending on him with faith and devotion. 'Purity' indicates both internal and external purity, and steadfastness is strong determination in the matter of practice of Self-knowledge. Self-control means control of body, senses, mind, intellect and ego and guiding them along the path of spiritual practice... (13.7)

किं च—

Moreover—

६६. इन्द्रियार्थेषु वैराग्यमनहंकार एव च।

जन्ममृत्युजराव्याधिदुःखदोषानुदर्शनम्॥ (१३.८)

66. *Dispassion for the objects of senses, egolessness, seeing the evil of misery in birth, oldage and disease...*

इन्द्रियार्थेषु रूपरसादिषु एते पुरुषं निबध्नन्ति अतः विषवत् त्याज्या इति बुद्ध्या वैराग्यं अनासङ्गः। अनहंकारः मानापमानेषु अहंकाराभावः। जन्ममृत्युजराव्याधिदुःखदोषानुदर्शनं जन्मनि केवलदुःखहेतुभूते मृत्यौ सर्वविनाशकारिणि जरायां शक्तिप्रागल्भ्यक्षयकारिण्यां व्याधौ शरीरबलतेजोहारिणि दुःखदोषानुदर्शनं दुःखमेव दोषः तं अनुद्रष्टुं शीलम्। अनित्यवस्तुष्वेतेषु निरन्तरदुःखदोषदर्शनाभ्यासेन मनः तेभ्यः परावृत्य परमात्मनि नित्ये निष्ठामाप्नोति।

Dispassion for sense-objects is detachment from form, taste, etc. with the wisdom, 'These sense-objects bind the soul; therefore, they should be shunned as poison'. Egolessness is absence of ego in honour as well as dishonour. Misery itself is the evil. Seeing that evil of misery in birth, etc. is to practise seeing it again and again in birth which is the cause of mere misery, in death which destroys everything, in oldage which brings decay to prowess and proficiency, and in disease which takes away strength and splendour of the body. By the constant practice of seeing the evil of misery in these transient things, the mind turns back from them and obtains its abode in the eternal Supreme Self... (13.8)

किं च—

And—

६७. असक्तिरनभिष्वङ्गः पुत्रदारगृहादिषु।

नित्यं च समचित्तत्वमिष्टानिष्टोपपत्तिषु॥ (१३.९)

67. *Detachment from and non-identification with son, wife, house, etc. and constant even-mindedness in pleasant and unpleasant circumstances...*

पुत्रदारगृहादिषु असक्तिः एते मम अहमेतेषामिति बुद्धिः सक्तिः। तदभावः असक्तिः। एवमनभिष्वङ्गः तेषु अभिमानाभावः। नित्यं च इष्टानिष्टोपपत्तिषु इष्टप्राप्तावनिष्टप्राप्तौ च समचित्तत्वं तुल्यता अविक्रियत्वं यदध्यात्मजीवने परमं साधनम्।

Detachment from son, wife, house, etc. means absence of the feeling, 'These are mine and I am theirs'. Similarly, absence of excessive love for them is non-identification with them. Constant even-mindedness in pleasant and unpleasant situations is being identical and immutable which is a supreme means in spiritual life... (13.9)

किं च—

Further—

६८. मयि चानन्ययोगेन भक्तिरव्यभिचारिणी।

विविक्तदेशसेवित्वमरतिर्जनसंसदि॥ (१३.१०)

68. *Unswerving devotion to Me through undistracted Yoga, resorting to solitude, aversion for the company of men...*

मयि परमेश्वरे च अनन्ययोगेन अपृथक्समाधिना भक्तिः अव्यभिचारिणी नान्यतोगामिनी। विविक्तदेशसेवित्वं विविक्तान् निर्जनान् देशान् सेवितुं शीलम्। जनसंसदि अभक्तजनसमूहेषु अरतिः अनानन्दः।

Unswerving devotion to Me, the Supreme Lord, through undistracted Yoga, undivided concentration, is that which does not go anywhere else. Resorting to solitude is the tendency to reside in uninhabited places. Aversion for company of men is dissatisfaction in the concourse of non-devotees... (13.10)

किं च—

Furthermore—

६९. अध्यात्मज्ञाननित्यत्वं तत्त्वज्ञानार्थदर्शनम्।

एतज्ज्ञानमिति प्रोक्तमज्ञानं यदतोऽन्यथा॥ (१३.११)

69. *Conviction in the permanence of spiritual Knowledge and perception of the Goal of the Knowledge of Truth—all this is called Knowledge; ignorance is that which is different from this.*

अध्यात्मज्ञाननित्यत्वं अध्यात्मज्ञानं प्रत्यगात्मज्ञानं तस्य नित्यत्वं तदेव ज्ञानं नित्यं नान्यद्बाह्यविषयकज्ञानमिति निरूढभावः येन तत्प्राप्तये प्रयतते साधकः। तत्त्वज्ञानार्थदर्शनं तत्त्वज्ञानस्य यत् परमं प्रयोजनं मोक्षः तस्य दर्शनं चिन्तनम्। तेन ज्ञानफलचिन्तनेन ज्ञानाय दृढयत्नं कर्तुमुत्सहते नान्यथा। एतत् ज्ञानमिति प्रोक्तम्। अज्ञानं यत् तत् अतः पूर्वोक्तज्ञानात् अन्यथा अन्यत्। एवं अज्ञानात् ज्ञानं विशिष्टं विवेकेन ज्ञानाय प्रयतत इति।

Spiritual Knowledge is the Knowledge of the Self within. The conviction in the permanence of spiritual Knowledge is the firm feeling that that alone is the eternal Knowledge and not that of external objects. By this conviction the aspirant tries for that Knowledge. Liberation is the supreme Goal of the Knowledge of Truth. Perception of that Goal means meditation on that. By that meditation on the fruit of Knowledge alone is one determined to put in strong effort for Knowledge, and not otherwise. All this (above-mentioned) is Knowledge. Ignorance is that which is different from the aforesaid Knowledge. Thus is Knowledge differentiated from ignorance so that one strives for Knowledge by discrimination. (13.11)

(to be continued)

If the highest illumination aims at nothing short of effacing all distinctions between the individual soul and the Universal Soul, and if its ideal is to establish a total identity of one's own self with Brahman existing everywhere, then it naturally follows that the highest spiritual experience of the aspirant cannot but lead him to a state of exalted self-dedication to the welfare of all. He makes the last divine sacrifice by embracing the universe, after transcending its limitations, which are the outcome of ignorance.

—Swami Shivananda, *Precepts for Perfection*, p. 79

Reviews and Notices

The Gospel Of Purity; Anthony Elenjimmittam; publ. Basic Education Publications, Aquinas Hall, Bombay (Mumbai) 400 050; 1994; pp. 252 + xii; price not stated.

The book under review is a product of the very mature penmanship of the eighty-year-old Reverend Anthony Elenjimmittam. It is just not one among the many that he has authored in his long and active life. It is a book packed with the wisdom of a man who believes in changing the world on the basis of what he calls 'the Gospel of Purity' or *Brahmacharya*, as it is called in the Hindu scriptures.

The author elaborates his thesis into twenty chapters spread over 252 pages. While there is much overlapping in respect of ideas presented in these chapters and at times they are repetitive almost to a fault, the central idea that binds these chapters is most succinctly represented in the following saying of Christ: *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

Man is born pure, but as he matures he becomes progressively degenerated, being increasingly given to the worship of Mammon and Venus. The only way of redeeming the fallen man as also nations and peoples is to reconvert them to the innocence and purity of childhood.

The pure in heart sees God. And what does he see? He sees that he and God are one, that he, in his ontological essence is Sat-Chit-Ananda, that he is Divinity undiluted. *Tat tvam asi*, you are That. The Atman (the Self) and Brahman are one and the same. Man is nothing less than Shiva himself (*Cidānandarūpaḥ Śivo'ham*). Man has to wake up to this innermost reality and become one with That One through purity of heart and mind, through purity manifested through his thoughts, words and deeds. That is the real nature of man. Infinite power, as Swami Vivekananda never tired of saying, is locked up in the small bodily frame of man. Man has to realize this potential, tearing asunder the limitations and immediateness of the five senses which make him deviate from his real nature by turning him into slaves of Mammon and Venus or of 'Kamini-kanchana', as Sri Ramakrishna used to say. This is the greatest message which the land of Ganges and Himalayas has bequeathed to the entire mankind. It is for the nations and peoples falling into the dungeon pits of sensuality, hedonism and violence to listen to this message of

India and redeem themselves.

In projecting purity as the quintessence of human life, and in telling the world at large that this is the eternal message of India to the world, the author has done a service to humanity. After all, human life is one long voyage to spiritual perfection. Man must return to his root. The straying man losing his way in the labyrinth of senses must come *home* (the eternal AUM) at long last. He must become Himself. There is no other way.

Dr. Anil Baran Ray, Burdwan

A Great Savant: Mahamahopadhyaya Gopinath Kaviraj; Govinda Gopal Mukhopadhyaya; publ. Jagdiswar Pal, Block I, Flat 13, 10 Galiff Street, Calcutta 700 003; 1990; pp. 66+v; Rs. 50/-.

This book pays a glowing tribute to Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj, a profound scholar of Indian philosophy, an explorer of the realms of consciousness and a thorough gentleman. He was a unique interpreter of Vedic and Tantric wisdom and brought forth the fundamental unity behind the Indian schools of philosophy. His erudition and spiritual proclivities earned him the title '*Sacala Viśvanātha*', i.e., 'a moving or living Viśvanātha'.

Born in a Bengali Brahmin family on 7 December 1887 at Dhamrai, a hamlet in Dhaka district (now in Bangladesh), Gopinath Kaviraj received education at Dhaka, Jaipur and Allahabad from where he fetched the Master's degree in Sanskrit in 1913 bagging the first position. He worked as Librarian of Saraswati Bhawan at Government Sanskrit College, Varanasi, and later served as Principal of the same college. During his tenure as librarian, he delved into the labyrinths of manuscripts and other unexplored writings and published more than seventy works. After taking voluntary retirement he fervently undertook academic work besides taking spiritual guidance from Swami Visuddhananda Saraswati of Varanasi, well known for his supernatural powers. 'What he had learnt at the feet of another great Master, Sivaramakinkara Yogatryananda who had revealed the secrets of the scriptures to him, was now verified through his initiation in Yoga by Swami Visuddhananda' (p. 37).

Gopinath Kaviraj received a number of honours for his versatility and wisdom. The British Government bestowed on him the title

'Mahamahopadhyaya' in 1934. He was also given 'Coronation Medal' in 1937. The Indian Government honoured him with Padma Vibhushan in 1964. Many Indian universities and cultural organizations of merit recognized his contribution and announced degrees and awards.

The book amply succeeds in portraying the multifaceted personality of Gopinath Kaviraj. Despite being a collection of papers written at different periods of time, it is presented in a well-knit form.

Dr. Satish K. Kapoor, Jalandhar City

(1) 114 Thoughts on Love and (2) 108 Thoughts on Success; J.P. Vaswani; publ. Gita Publishing House, 10, Sadhu Vaswani Path, Pune 411 001; year not mentioned; pages not numbered; price US \$ 4.99 each.

Sri J.P. Vaswani (called lovingly as Dada Vaswani by his followers) is a disciple of Dadaji T.L. Vaswani who is acclaimed a mystic and philosopher. J.P. Vaswani, soon to complete eighty years of age, has been spreading the message of love and the teachings of his master. He is a good speaker and his talks are couched in a simple language but contain profound spiritual thoughts.

These two small and beautiful books can be carried in a pocket. All the pages are in pleasing, pastel shades and each page has an artistic motif and one saying of Vaswaniji. These sayings are for *manana* and can give ready solace and succour to a troubled mind.

To quote a few sayings from *114 Thoughts on Love*: (1) If you would walk the way of love, never feel hurt nor yield to anger, but accept pain as a part of life. (2) Do not love yourself and you will begin to love God! Do not be self-centred and you will be loved by all. (3) We become what we love. If we love the world — its pleasures, possessions, power — we become worldly. If we love God we become divine.

And, from the *108 Thoughts on Success*: (1) Pride is the most worthwhile thing to swallow. It is the only thing which, when swallowed, never chokes. (2) Be not afraid of life, but believe that every experience life brings to you is for your good. (3) Every good thing comes as a gift from God. Of what can we be proud?

These books make ideal gifts for occasions like birthdays, partings, etc. Such books are indeed priceless.

Dr. Kamala S. Jaya Rao, Hyderabad

Jewel in the Lotus: Deeper Aspects of Hinduism; Mumtaz Ali; compiled by A. Menon; publ. Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., L-10, Green Park Extension, New Delhi 110 016; 1997; pp. 161+vi; Rs. 90/-.

The title of the book is symbolic. The book deals with man and his goal. It is as well a record of the spiritual journey of the author. Although the destination is perhaps far away, the charting of the path is possible and the task is important. This may help co-pilgrims.

The book opens with a chapter titled 'The Mystique of "M": A Profile'. Here 'M' stands for Mumtaz Ali, the author. The chapter narrates the course of his life till the present and his search for a Guru. This search led him to a few personalities, some well known and some obscure, and they, he believes, did him good in his unfoldment. Mumtaz Ali read the scriptures, not only of the religion in which he was born, but of other religions as well and he could trace the unifying principles in all of them.

The urge for spiritual unfoldment brought him in contact with Pujapura Swami and later with Mayee Ma of Kanyakumari. These contacts made him progress smoothly. Later, J. Krishnamurti also was helpful in formulating some of his lasting thoughts.

The third chapter titled 'Thus Spake the Master' narrates M's dialogue with his Himalayan Guru, recorded not immediately but later in tranquillity, years afterwards, when 'M' was in the Andamans. This is perhaps the most important chapter in the book and has great spiritual significance. It would have been better if the book had ended here.

Other chapters on 'Essence of Hinduism' et seq are just appendages. They deal with Vedantic Quest, the Gayatri Mantra, about Kundalini and Death. On going through the entire book it seems that the author is a happy bird in the beautiful garden of the world. It is however difficult to gauge his spiritual depth. He also does not claim to have arrived at the end of the journey. But the book serves its purpose, viz., to enthuse a spiritual seeker to go ahead. The message of the book is that one should live in the world like a lotus — in water and yet above it. No water will cling to it or its leaves.

The language of the book is lucid and the paper and the print are good. The book has an appreciative foreword by Sri Karan Singh.

*Dr. Narendranath B. Patil
Mumbai*

News and Reports

FIRST AMERICAN FULL-SIZE STATUE OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA UNVEILED

The first American full-size statue of Swami Vivekananda, cast by G. Paul & Sons (the well-known Calcutta sculptors) and modelled after a photograph of Swamiji taken in Chicago in standing posture, was unveiled at the Hindu Temple of Greater Chicago (HTGC) in Lemont, Illinois, on Sunday, 12 July 1998. Although the famous American sculptress, Malvina Hoffman, had done bust-size statues of Swami Vivekananda which are located at the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center in New York and our monastery in Trabuco, this is the first full-size statue of Swamiji to be installed in America outside of our centres.

The dedication ceremony began at 4.00 p.m. with a procession of our monks accompanied by Vedic chanting from the priests of the HTGC. After the invocation by **Swami Chidananda** (Head of the Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago), **Mr. G.L.N. Reddy** (President of the HTGC) welcomed all the guests, numbering about 1000, on

behalf of the temple.

Swami Chidananda gave an introduction recounting Swami Vivekananda's historic address at the World's Parliament of Religions in 1893 and the many contributions made by him to the East and the West. This was followed by an address by **Mr. Amrish Mahajan**, Chairperson of the Vivekananda Statue Committee, HTGC.

The **Hon'ble Mr. J.C. Sharma**, Consul General of India, highlighted Swami Vivekananda's message to the modern world, and then unveiled the statue, bringing forth a great applause from the audience. Thereafter, **Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj**, Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, dedicated the statue. It was especially appropriate that Swami Atmasthanandaji, who had overseen the casting of the statue in Calcutta while he was the General Secretary of the Order, performed the dedication.

The dedication ceremony was accompanied throughout by the chanting of the temple priests



Temple priests, Swami Chidananda, and Swami Atmasthanandaji lead the procession of Swamis through the temple grounds to Vivekananda Hill for the statue dedication

of the HTCC. **Smt. Anuradha Paudwal**, the renowned Indian singer, sang a beautiful *bhajan* after the dedication was over.

Swami Atmasthanandaji addressed the audience and told them that we had not brought Swami Vivekananda to Chicago, but rather he himself had come to be with us. After this inspiring talk, **Mr. Bangaru Lakshman**, MP from India, shared his thoughts on Swami Vivekananda and released the Souvenir Book and Souvenir Medalion commemorating the event.

Mr. Mithilesh Mishra, a member of the Vivekananda Vedanta Society, read out message from many dignitaries: **Most Revered Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj**, President of the Ramakrishna Order; **Revered Swamis Ranganathanandaji** and **Gahananandaji**, Vice-Presidents of the Ramakrishna Order; **Swami Sarvagatanandaji**, Head of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society in Boston and the Vedanta Society of Providence. Messages were also received from **Mr. K.R. Narayanan**, President of India; **Mr. Krishan Kant**, Vice-President of India; **Mr. A.B. Vajpayee**, Prime Minister of India; and **Mr. Naresh Chandra**, the Ambassador of India to the United States.

In his message, Mr. K.R. Narayanan said, 'Swamiji built bridges between ancient and contemporary India, between India and the West, and between spiritual awareness and social responsibilities. His life and teachings were endowed with a fiery passion which ... left behind an indelible influence on those who gave primacy to thought and action in this century and those of future generations.... The Ramakrishna Mission which he founded in 1897 was his vehicle for dedicated service to the people catering to their educational, social, cultural and spiritual needs. He asserted, "A nation is advanced in proportion as education and intelligence spread amongst the masses." He gave primacy to uplift of women in society as a precondition for the awakening of people to attain greater goals. He also placed immense faith in the youth in transforming society.... It was in Chicago, on 11 September 1893, that he rose to speak from a public platform for the first time, and the words spoken then have since resonated around the globe to create an awakening in the minds and hearts of people in far corners.... May it [the statue] remain as a constant reminder to Swami Vivekananda's message of inter-faith amity, understanding, tolerance, social reform and humanitarian service.'

Mr. Jim Edgar, Governor of the State of Illinois, in his message said, '...we reflect on the many contributions that Swami Vivekananda made as the first spiritual and cultural ambassa-



Swami Atmasthanandaji (centre) and Swami Chidananda place the 10 foot long garland around Swamiji's neck

dor to America. Swami Vivekananda became quite famous all over the world due to his teachings, travels, and the books that he wrote. The installation of this statue is truly a momentous and historic event.'

A number of the Heads of our Centres in North America had come to Chicago for the dedication. **Swami Pramathananda** (Toronto), **Swami Prabuddhananda** (San Francisco), **Swami Tathagatananda** (New York), **Swami Bhaskarananda** (Seattle), **Swami Shantarupananda** (Portland), and **Swami Prapannananda** (Sacramento) paid their homage to Swami Vivekananda.

Swami Varadananda, the Master of Ceremonies, then introduced the special guests who had joined the dedication. Of special note are the representatives of other religions.

Dr. B. Srinivasan, a member of the Vivekananda Vedanta Society, gave the vote of thanks. His talk was followed by an elevating *bhajan* by **Mr. Tapan Bhattacharyya**. Swami Varadananda thereafter concluded the programme and invited the audience to offer flowers to Swami Vivekananda at the newly installed statue. Food was



Swamiji towers over an estimated 2500 devotees from his vantage point on Vivekananda Hill

provided by the HTGC to all those who had come for the dedication.

The 10-foot-2-inch bronze statue of Swami Vivekananda with the beautiful decoration was very magnificent. It will be a fitting monument

to Swami Vivekananda and the spiritual ideals he brought to the world. The 3½-foot pedestal upon which the statue stands, bears the following inscription in black marble:

**Swami Vivekananda
(1863–1902)**

Swami Vivekananda, India's first spiritual and cultural ambassador to the West, introduced Hinduism to America at the first World's Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893. He had a profound impact on both the East and the West, dedicating his life to spreading the ancient teachings of the Vedanta and promoting the ideal of service to humanity as an act of worship.

The foremost disciple of Sri Ramakrishna (1836–1886), he founded the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, which now have over 135 active centres around the world.

A Gift To

The Hindu Temple of Greater Chicago, Lemont, IL.

From

Vivekananda Vedanta Society, Chicago, IL.

Dedicated By

**Swami Atmasthananda, Vice-President
Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, India
Sunday, July 12, 1998**

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